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ABSTRACT

Twenty-six contributed papers address aspects of parents programs developed by colleges and universities. Papers have the following titles and authors: "Parents--Who Are They and What Do They Want?" (Clark Oldroyd); "Bringing Parents into the Institutional Family" (John Sayre); "Parents Programs and Philanthropy Along the Lifespan" (Deborah Adams McKean); "The Princeton Parents Program: Then and Now" (MaryMargaret Halsey); "Creating a New Tradition: Parents Day at the University of Chicago" (Jean Sitterly Treese); "Parents Weekend: The Centerpiece of a Parents Program" (Midge Wood Brittingham); "Organizing a Parents Weekend from Start to Finish" (Deborah Duncan); "Parents Day Shows: Reaching for the Stars" (Larry Weiss); "Orientation Programs for Parents" (Grace Severino); "A Family Affair: Involving Grandparents" (Catherine Esty Wejchert); "Cultivation: The Key to Creating Loyal Alumni Parents" (Nelson Ross); "Communicating Effectively and Efficiently with Parents" (Mary New); "Parent Records: Tracking Down and Keeping Track of Parents" (Don Collins et al.); "Parents--Who Needs Them? We Do!" (Barbara Tipsord Todd); "Ask and Ye Shall Receive" (Thomas McNamee); "Parents as Partners in Student Recruitment" (Christine Wilkinson); "Using Parents in Career Assistance Programs" (Sarah Spradlin); "101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers" (Vern Lake); "Using Parents in the Institution's Fund-raising Efforts" (Thomas McNamee and Kristina Schaefer); "Starting Your Program Perfectly" (Ellen Glazerman); "Managing a Parents Annual Giving Campaign at an Independent School" (Carolyn Smith); "Dear Mom and Dad: Please Send Money" (John Detmold); "Parents Funds: Are We Asking Too Much?" "Grandparents are Softies" (Robin Goldman); "Parents as Graduates: Four-year Friends or Long-term Supporters?" (Sarah Yancey); "Last Words: Letting Go While Hanging in There" (Susan Hunt). (DB)

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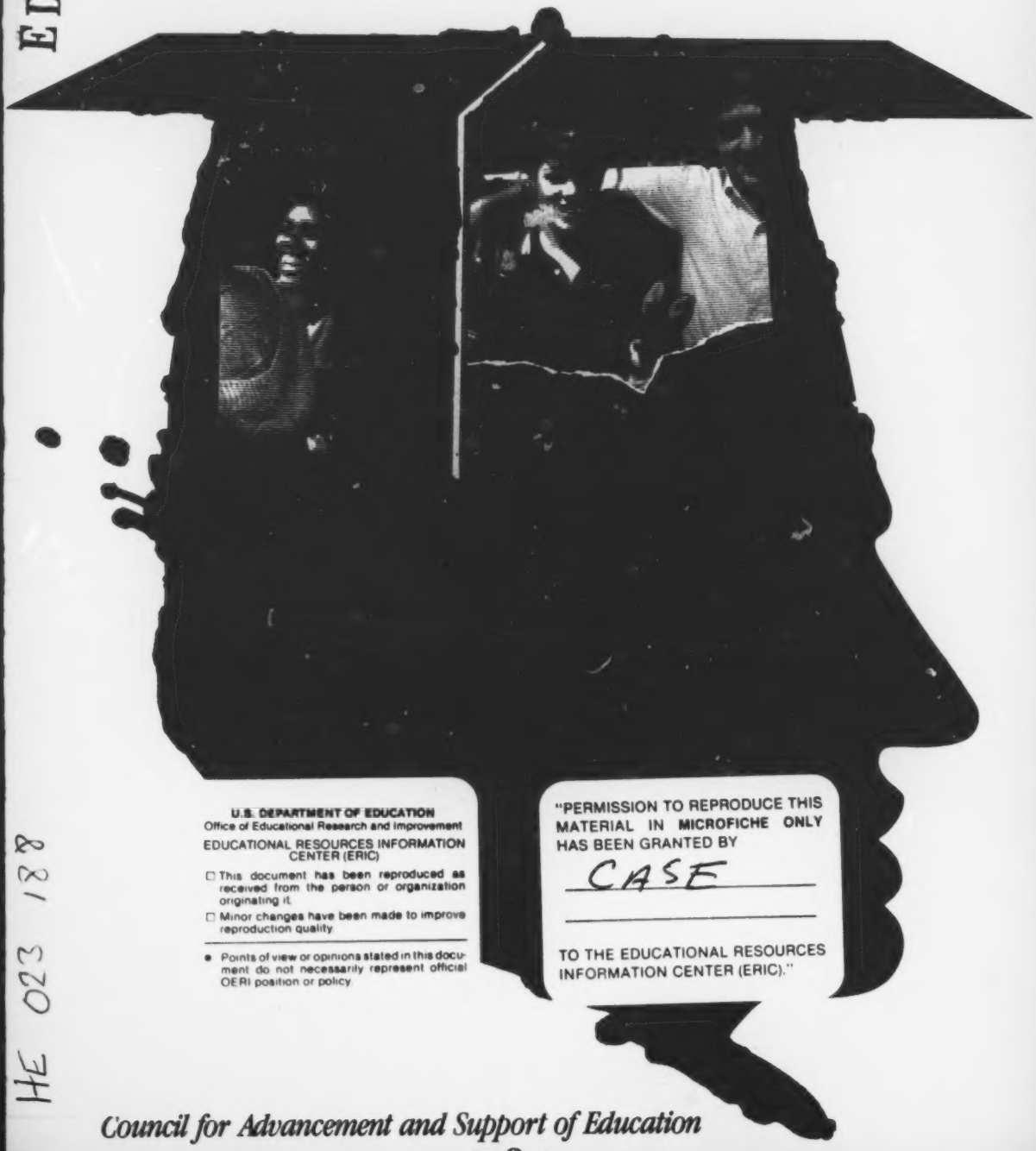
Parents Programs: How to Create Lasting Ties

Larry J. Weiss, Editor



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Council for Advancement and Support of Education

Parents Programs: How to Create Lasting Ties

Larry J. Weiss, Editor

Council for Advancement and Support of Education

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Foreword

Parents have been contributors to and supporters of precollege education since it first began. They helped build the first schools, provided whatever salary the teachers got, and—most important—sent their children to be educated. Today, parents continue to take an active role in elementary and secondary schools.

Colleges and universities are realizing how important it is to keep parents involved with their children's education after they graduate from high school. Although going to college traditionally signals independence, parents don't suddenly lose interest in their sons' and daughters' lives once they leave for campus.

Parents programs provide parents with a needed channel for their continuing interest in the student's education, a way by which they can legitimately be involved and make their own contribution to the student's life away from home. Through parents programs such as those described in this book, we create a connection between our institutions and the parents of our students. This connection can make parents our best supporters through their student's college years and afterward. Parents who are committed in this way will take pleasure in every success of the institution and be concerned and supportive in times of crisis. They will give generously of their time and their money, and they will encourage others to do so.

While the financial benefits of developing a loyal parent constituency can be substantial, they are not the only reason—or even the most important reason—for parents programs. Loyal parents who believe in the institution do their part in creating an image for the institution that, in the long run, will reap more benefits than any fund-raising effort might garner.

Our thanks to Larry Weiss of Bowling Green State University, who helped plan and develop it for us, and to the chapter authors, including Larry, who contributed their experience and expertise to CASE's first book on programming for parents.

Gary H. Quehl
CASE President
December 1989

Introduction

An alumni colleague once noted that, at any given point in time, no group has stronger short-term interest in the welfare of a particular school, college, or university than the parents of its students. While alumni, donors, faculty, staff, and others have ongoing, long-term interest and concern for the institution, parents' interests are centered on that period of time when their son or daughter is a student there—and their interest is great.

In spite of this fact, only recently have colleges and universities begun to incorporate parents as a meaningful part of the institution's family. Conversely, however, independent schools "saw the light" much earlier and have long depended heavily on parents for volunteer and financial support.

There is a great deal parents can and will do to support your institution's efforts (and providing dollars is only one of many alternatives) if a solid, worthwhile parents program is in place. It is not uncommon to see this often neglected public transformed into an active, helpful, and supportive group that makes you wonder how you ever succeeded without them.

I am pleased to participate in CASE's first publication on parents programs. We have assembled professionals from successful programs throughout the country, and I am confident that you will find this book interesting, thought-provoking, and beneficial. Whether you are just beginning a parents program or are in need of fresh programming or fund-raising ideas, this publication should help.

We have attempted to deal with wide-ranging subject matter—parent councils, parents days and weekends, managing a parents program, record-keeping, communicating with parents, fund raising, capitalizing on parents' talents, incorporating grandparents in the program, thanking parents, and more.

I owe sincere thanks to the many authors who shared their expertise. They are a knowledgeable group of professionals in institutional advancement, and each contributed a significant amount of time and effort to this publication. Special thanks goes to CASE staff members, Susan Hunt and Sarah Spradlin, whose talents and hard work made this book possible.

Best wishes for every success with your parents program.

Larry J. Weiss
Associate Vice President and Director of Alumni Affairs
Bowling Green State University

Section 1

Why a Parents Program?

Chapter 1

Parents—Who Are They And What Do They Want?

Clark Oldroyd
Associate Director, Alumni Relations
University of Colorado at Boulder

Parent: *n.* **1.** a father or mother. **2.** a progenitor or ancestor. **3.** any animal, organism, or plant in relation to its offspring. **4.** anything from which other things are derived; source; origin (*Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*).

As demonstrated by the publication of this book, *Parents Programs: How to Create Lasting Ties,* more and more attention is being given to parents by our colleagues and administrators in higher education. For what purpose? And who exactly is receiving this attention?

We all know what a parent is—at least as far as the first definition above. All of us had parents and many of us are parents ourselves. As we begin to focus attention on the parents of students attending our colleges and universities, we should pause to consider why parents deserve our time and our efforts. We need to know who they are and what they want.

Parents: Our most loyal constituency

First and most important, parents may be the most loyal constituency we have and not because of any affiliation they have as alumni, townspeople, or contributors to the institution. Parents are interested in the lives of their children and in the success of their children's educational pursuits. They want infor-

mation about their children's institution, and they are looking for opportunities to serve and to be involved with it.

As readers at independent schools know, parents of children in kindergarten through twelfth grade are commonly involved with the schools their children attend. This desire to be involved doesn't stop when the high school diploma is awarded. A parent who has nurtured a child and participated in his or her education for 18 years is not going to lose interest just because the child, now a young adult, enters college. Most parents continue to have a keen interest in the child's education.

The opportunity for involvement and the manner in which parents are involved may change, however, and distance is a factor if the parents do not live near the institution. If parental involvement decreases in the college years, it is more often for want of opportunity than for want of interest. In fact, we might expect the interest and involvement to increase. For not only have the parents helped prepare the student to enter college, but they have also made a serious financial commitment to the institution. They participated in the college choice and have invested more than just dollars (and many of them, at that) in the hope that this will be the "perfect college" for the student.

Thus, when parents ask, "How are things going?" they are not only trying to find out how the student is adjusting to life at college (and life away from home), but they also want to know if the institution is all they hoped it would be—the "perfect college." They want to know that the right decision was made for the right reasons or, if you will, that they are getting what they agreed to pay for.

Distance often prevents the same type of involvement as when both parents and student lived together in the same community as the institution, but involvement is not necessarily curtailed. Parents will have questions about the institution, and they will be interested in the answers. You can be guaranteed of their attention and, in most cases, of their intense loyalty to the institution for the time that their child is a student. If you treat them well during that period, their affection and commitment to the institution may continue long after their child has graduated.

If you develop ways to involve parents after graduation, you will be surprised at how many continue to give to the parents fund or to serve on a committee. Again, their level of involvement will probably change. For example, you might expect a parent to serve as a "solid" committee member, but not to chair a committee. Many parents choose to stay involved in some way if only to continue to receive university publications.

At the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU), we invite parents to join the Alumni Association. Many join because they want to receive additional information about the university and to participate in university events. We have been pleased to see several parents join a special gift club of the Alumni Association and even to serve on its board of directors.

I often find that parents of current students know more about what's happening on campus than alumni do. If they (or their student) don't like what's taking place, parents will get involved. Campus issues can become the catalysts for parental involvement.

Administrators, program directors, and regents welcome feedback from consumers, especially when it is positive support. At the University of Colorado, parents and university administrators share their concerns, and there is plenty of give and take.

This is not always the case, however. At many institutions, parents all too often fall into one of three types:

• **The forgotten parent:** The college or university makes no effort to involve parents. All information is sent to the student. While the student is usually mature enough to process all this information and to handle tuition bills, registration, dorm applications, and so on, he or she can't be expected to pass these communications along to the parent. Even though parents are no longer needed to handle the details for the young adult student, parents still want and need to be informed.

Parents may be willing to make a contribution, assist with orientation, or speak to prospective students and their parents, but they won't do any of these things unless they are asked to. When we mailed a general parents fund solicitation to all parents of CU students, we received a check for $2,000 from the parent of a first-semester freshman. This was not an expensive promotion piece sent to a selected list of parents who we believed could make a significant contribution. It was a "simple" letter asking for contributions to the parents fund—and all we had to do was ask.

• **The overlooked parent:** The college or university recognizes the existence of parents but doesn't fully involve them in the life of the university. Although parents are busy people and probably don't *need* another meeting to attend or another cause to support, their affiliation with the institution their child attends is a natural one. You can expect parents to feel good will and loyalty; if they didn't, the student would be attending another institution.

Remember to invite parents to attend alumni chapter events. Alumni and parents share many concerns about the institution and can support it in the same way. Look for methods to involve the parents in projects or programs that meet your institution's needs.

• **The misused parent:** Although the institution recognizes the parent constituency, it either fails to involve parents or attempts to involve them in inappropriate ways. For example, not every parent can support the parents fund or the annual fund. Although financial contributions are an important way for parents to assist the institution, if this is the only kind of participation you ask parents for, their good feelings will soon disappear. Similarly, don't urge a parent who is uncomfortable with public speaking to make a presentation at college night.

Often the institution that misuses its parents will start off on the right foot by holding a parents day program. The response is great—parents are surprised to find that a special program exists just for them, and they are delighted to be invited to campus. But after this gesture of good will from the institution, nothing follows. A parents day or weekend should be just the beginning of your parents program. These events should serve as an opportunity to identify parents who are willing to assist with admissions, legislative relations, fund raising, and faculty programs—ongoing programs that involve the parents and serve the institution.

No parent should be forgotten, overlooked, or misused. Parents can be a loyal constituency of great service to your institution. You need to take good care of them.

Why do parents want to participate?

Most parents are eager to participate in a parents program for one or more of several reasons: They want to stay involved with their student, they want to learn more about the institution, they want to affect change when necessary, and they want to support worthy programs.

At first, the student is the only link between parents and the institution. This may change when a parent becomes more actively involved with a committee or a specific project or after the student graduates. But at least in the beginning, parents are most likely to become involved in programs that they believe will affect their student.

Sometimes parents participate because they are angry about a situation on campus and want to change it. For example, campus safety was a concern at CU when student cyclists were injured in accidents caused by a poorly designed bicycle-pedestrian walkway. The parents of one injured student took their concerns to the university staff members who supervised the traffic on campus and worked with them to change the intersection.

If the problem is resolved to parents' satisfaction, you will gain strong supporters for your institution. Seeing the bureaucracy of the institution take time to deal with a specific problem will make a believer out of the worst skeptic.

Parents programs—how do they benefit the institution?

Serving the parents of your students will take time, just as it takes time to serve alumni or to work with students. Very few (if any) of the readers of this book are looking for ways to fill their time. Most of us have a full list of responsibilities and too much to do already. Why, then, is it important to create—or increase—

services for parents? You can accomplish two important goals with a parents program:

- providing assistance to the institution; and
- serving as liaison between parents and the institution.

Parents serving the institution

Parent involvement depends in part upon the needs of your institution and the degree to which you wish to involve members of this "external constituency" to meet those needs. You hope to make your parents feel that they are not external—that they are an integral part of the institutional family. Nevertheless, they are outsiders in the sense that they aren't involved in the daily life of the campus as are students, faculty, staff, and administrators. Some of the specific ways that parents can participate include:

- **Admissions:** If declining admissions is a concern, what better sales representatives do you have than parents of current students? Parents are eager to spread the word about the success of their student at your institution, and they can be great ambassadors in recruiting new students.

One of the most successful recruiting efforts at the University of Colorado involves over a thousand volunteers. We began the National Alumni Admissions Assistance Program because we wanted to involve alumni in admissions efforts, but today more than 100 parents also participate. They meet new and prospective students and their parents, attend college night programs at local high schools around the country, and make telephone calls to accepted students and their parents. Parents of incoming students appreciate the opportunity to discuss their concerns with a parent who already has a student at the university.

You will need to provide some training so that parents feel comfortable in this role, and you will need to make sure they don't give out misinformation. This doesn't mean they need be an expert on every facet of the institution. At CU I ask parent volunteers to speak about the university only from their perspective as parents.

- **Fund raising:** Parents are another source of private giving to your institution. We know that they are interested in the institution and were probably involved in their student's decision to attend. Parents can assist by contributing to the annual fund or to a special parents fund. If possible, involve parents in the allocation of these funds. They receive great satisfaction in recommending how "their" money should be used to benefit the institution.

I have found that parents are most interested in providing support for services and equipment that will directly benefit their student and, therefore, all students. The Parents Fund Committee at the University of Colorado has shown special interest in providing funds for scholarships and supporting programs that enhance advising and teaching.

• **Legislative relations:** Public institutions are finding it ever more important to maintain good relations with those holding public office. Not only are parents tax-paying voters, but many of them have valuable contacts with legislators. A parent who is willing to open the right door or speak on behalf of the institution is a valuable asset.

While both public and private institutions benefit when parents can talk to their elected representatives about the issues facing higher education today, involving parents in this way may require considerable diplomacy on your part. You will need to keep parents informed about the issues and what actions the institution is taking. And be careful: Involvement of an overly enthusiastic parent may prove to be counterproductive.

• **Membership on committees and task forces:** Are there committees or projects that lack representation from this important constituency? Would it be appropriate for a parent to serve on a search committee or an ad hoc committee? Every committee need not have parent representation, but some may be particularly appropriate for parent involvement. For example, it is helpful to have parents review materials sent to new students and their parents about on- and off-campus housing.

The president of the Parents Association at the University of Colorado is a voting member of the board of directors of the Alumni Association, and this increases communication between two groups that share similar concerns and can work together to support the university.

• **Student life:** This general term describes the daily issues a student faces. "Student life" includes dorms, tuition, fees, registration, campus safety, funding for clubs, library resources, and athletic events. Often a parent's reason for becoming involved centers around a student life issue that his or her student is facing. The parent does not necessarily attempt to solve the problem—in fact, most parents prefer to step back and let the student work through the difficulty. Parents recognize that this is an important part of letting go and allowing the student to assume responsibility for his or her life. But don't make the mistake of assuming that parents are not interested in the outcome.

At the University of Colorado, parents have become involved with such student life issues as noise in the dorms, funding for controversial public speakers, and academic advising. These are areas that may spark parents' interest at your institution as well. Where there are difficult decisions to be made, faculty and staff often appreciate having the opportunity to discuss options with parents and to know of their concerns and their support. Once parents become involved, be alert for ways to keep them involved.

• **Parents weekend/parents day:** Whether it be a one-day program or a schedule of events covering two or three days, this is the occasion when most parents visit the campus during the academic year. Parents are often surprised at a basic fact that you take for granted—that you want them to come to campus and learn more about what makes your institution such a great learning place

for their student. Events that have been planned especially for them make them feel at home.

If you can, turn this event over to a planning committee made up of parents. Allowing them to feel ownership in this event results in a better program. At the University of Colorado, parents are involved from the very beginning with scheduling the events for our three-day program. Their input keeps the program fresh. During the weekend, parents assist with registration and serve as hosts at various receptions; members of the board of directors of the Parents Association serve a pancake breakfast on the final day.

This is one of the best times to recruit parents to become involved in ongoing activities of the Parents Association. Participating parents are the best people to identify and cultivate new parents to serve both the Parents Association and the institution.

• **Resources for special programs:** Parents can serve as a resource bank—a corps of experts in many different fields. Career information is a good area for parent experts. A parent of a student who is exploring career options is likely to be especially receptive to other students seeking advice on his or her particular profession. Parents can also serve as executives-in-residence. If your career services office has a career network involving alumni, it might be able to include parents as well. This is a good way to involve parents who do not live in the same geographical area as the institution.

Enabling parents to serve the institution is one way to create a special bond between the parent and the institution and, at the same time, justify the money and time devoted to a parents program.

Parents program as liaison

Your parents program serves a vital function as liaison between parents and the institution. An active and responsive parents program can accomplish the following:

• **generate good will:** A parents program tells parents that they are important to the institution, that they are special people with a special role to play in the life of the institution.

• **provide a sense of belonging:** Parents days or parents weekends and other special programs that include parents show them that they are welcome on campus. These programs make parents feel that they are "part of the family." Parents who feel this sense of belonging are more likely to support the institution through contributions and service.

• **give parents a reason to visit campus:** When students leave home to go to college, parents must learn to "let go." At the same time they cherish ways to stay in touch. Events on campus provide an official reason for parents to visit their student. Saturday morning meetings are usually very popular;

parents appreciate the excuse to visit campus and have lunch with their son or daughter.

• **provide information:** Special events such as orientation, parents days or weekends, and publications written for parents provide information that increases understanding of the institution. Keeping parents informed will prevent or at least minimize hard feelings that may occur if parents don't understand what is expected of them or—more importantly—what is expected of their student. When financial aid applications are due, how students arrange to see an academic adviser, and whether the tuition bill is sent to the student or the parent become essential "survival" information. A parents newsletter is a good vehicle for information. Include important dates such as vacation periods and when tuition is due. Parents also appreciate a list of whom to contact for quick help.

Parents who serve the institution are volunteers and, as with any group of volunteers, you must take good care of them. Even parents who perform no volunteer activities may feel that the tuition they pay entitles them to some recognition and attention. Most parents, however, simply want you to acknowledge the role they played in fostering their student's desire for higher education and helping him or her select your institution. Recognizing their continuing role in their student's education will make them feel a part of the institution.

Factors that lead to successful parent involvement

What makes a successful parents program? There is no single answer to this question but a series of answers. While our parents program is a successful one, it might not work at your institution. Here are some of the key factors:

1. Know the expectations of the parents. As you begin to identify parents who are interested in a parents program, ask questions:

- What issues are they interested in?
- Why do they feel there should be a parents program?
- How do they see themselves becoming involved?
- What do they think most parents want or need from a parents program?
- What are the institution's immediate needs?
- What long-range goals should the program have?

Establish a set of goals based on the answers to these questions and use them as you develop your program. Remember, many parents will have a strong interest in the activities and programs of your institution but only during the time their student is enrolled. While some parents will continue to be interested and involved after the student graduates, most will have a high level of interest for a short time. This is an important difference between parents and alumni.

Don't be afraid to borrow from parents programs at both large and small institutions, but do recognize the differences.

At small colleges, parents often expect more individual attention for their student and for themselves as well. Small colleges are more likely to have a parents program than larger institutions. Many of the models for successful parents programs have come from small private colleges that have traditionally shown an interest in parents and have developed programs to maintain their interest.

The challenge for large universities, then, is to provide the same level of attention that a parent could expect from a small college. Generally, parents don't expect personal attention from a large university, and so, when they do receive it, it greatly enhances their affection for the institution.

2. Identify institutional support for the parents program. What office on your campus will be responsible for developing and maintaining a parents program? On some campuses, services to parents are provided by a number of departments. This is not bad in itself but it does require good communication and organization. Parents usually see these services as part of one program from your institution, and they don't notice or care that one office handles parent orientation and another the parents weekend. Explaining the situation to them will only confirm that bureaucracy is alive and well on campus.

Where do you find the funding for your parents program? Before you go in search of financial support, identify the purpose of your program. Is it to increase communication between parents and the institution? To increase funds raised from private sources? To serve as outreach from the department of student services? Identifying the goal of the program will help you establish justification for funding.

As the parents program develops and it becomes evident how valuable it is to the institution, you may find that funding is easier to obtain and may even become more centralized—that is, one department or area assumes responsibility for the program and the budget, rather than a number of areas (alumni, development, student affairs, and so on) requesting smaller amounts. As you begin your program, however, you may need to rely on several different sources for funding.

Consider carefully which events will be free and which will require parents to pay the cost. Cost is always a concern to parents who are coping with tuition payments, but most are willing to pay for some of the services they receive. If you can involve parents in your planning at this point, ask for their advice; they will tell you when parents will be unwilling to pay the price you have set—or any price at all.

3. Involve parents in meaningful projects. This book will help you plan programs that involve parents in a number of different areas. Whether you involve parents in fund raising, admissions, career fairs, legislative relations, or parents weekends, remember that parents are busy people. They want to volunteer their time and their support to projects that are meaningful.

This doesn't mean that every project must be highly visible or result in great change, but it does mean that parents should understand the purpose of their

activity. If they don't understand why they are asked to attend meetings or make telephone calls, they'll soon lose interest and drift away.

4. Communicate with parents. Communication between the institution and parents is essential. Without effective communication, parents won't know about your programs or won't understand them, and you'll engage neither their interest nor their support.

Virtually all information from the institution is of great interest to most parents. One way to give them plenty of up-to-date information is to provide a parents handbook with information on dates, rules and policies, and telephone numbers. In addition, a regular parents newsletter or publication can include current information about the institution, faculty profiles, discussion of issues facing students, and regular columns written by administrators and the parent volunteer leadership.

Another way to communicate is to invite parents to alumni chapter events. When the president or a faculty member travels to an alumni chapter meeting, the program is often of interest to parents as well. Look for ways to include parents at these events and in programs planned for your other constituencies. It doesn't cost a lot and it helps make parents feel that they are an important part of the institutional family.

5. Recognize parents for their support. Remember that you are working with volunteers. Giving them praise when it is due is not only courteous but greatly appreciated. A gift is not necessary, although there may be occasions when one is appropriate. Thank-you notes and letters of appreciation are always in order.

One nice custom at the University of Colorado takes place at commencement. We ask parents and other significant family members who have supported the students during their undergraduate years to stand and be recognized as "those who helped make all this possible." This simple gesture generates a great deal of good will—and costs nothing.

6. Keep faculty and staff informed about the parents program. Just as parents need to stay informed about campus issues, the institutional community needs to be aware of the support and involvement of the parents. As your colleagues become more aware of the parents program, they will invite parents to participate in the activities and events in their areas.

Faculty and staff are glad to receive support from parents, while parents appreciate the opportunity to share their viewpoints. Bringing parents together with faculty, staff, and administrators improves communication and benefits the university.

Conclusion

You can expect many of the same kinds of support from your parent constituency that your alumni provide. Parents, too, have a high level of interest and

will serve as ambassadors for your institution. Parents also provide feedback and information. This can be important at times when policies change, tuition rises, and difficult decisions are being made. You need to know the opinions of this important constituency.

Involvement with a parents program is often a first step in increasing and continuing support and loyalty to the institution. Parents may stay involved after their student graduates, and their involvement may nourish that of their children who have become new alumni.

Of the several benefits that parents receive from the program, perhaps the most important is increased communication. All parents want to know what is happening on campus and appreciate publications that keep them informed. The parents program gives parents a way to continue to be involved in the education of their student and, at the same time, benefit the institution.

Chapter 2

Bringing Parents into The Institutional Family

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In the early '60s, as I was beginning my career in institutional advancement (it wasn't called that then), I was always puzzled by the lack of involvement of parents and other relatives or friends with our colleges and universities. It seemed to me that they were one of the most important (if not *the* most important) constituencies a college or university could have. These people gave us their children—our students and our future alumni; they gave us the very reason our colleges and universities existed.

Because parents' link to the institution is a living one, a flesh-and-blood extension of themselves, their interests and concerns should have been of great significance to us. In many cases, the presence of a student at our institution was accomplished through great sacrifice—both emotional and financial—on the part of his or her parents. And for many parents, this vicarious connection was their first contact with any form of higher education. They needed, and deserved, to be part of an active relationship with "their" college or university.

At each college or university for which I have been responsible for the alumni and development program, I have always had a parents club, a parents association, or a "friends and family" association. (It doesn't really matter what you call the organization as long as the name has a favorable connotation and suitably identifies the group, but some people feel that the word "club" implies primarily a social purpose.) These institutions included Marshall University in West Virginia (1959-65), Northern Illinois University (1965-70), Western Illinois

University (1970-77), Blackburn College (1977-78), Illinois State University (1978-83), and Joliet Junior College (1983-88).

At each of these institutions, parents have shown great interest in being included in the college or university family. In fact, some of the most enthusiastic institutional supporters have been parents. While other constituent groups required cultivation, I have always found that parents were immediately interested and ready to participate.

Parents want to be involved

There are many reasons for parents' receptivity. Many parents and relatives feel that they need an excuse to visit campus more often than their student son or daughter might encourage. And some parents are so eager to be actively involved that they welcome an invitation to serve in an official role at the institution, such as a member of an overall institution, college, or department advisory committee; a regional lay representative for the institution; a member of the special events planning committee; or other meaningful institutional involvement.

Once parents become linked to an institution through an attending son or daughter, they take on a claim of ownership and begin to desire the success of "their" institution. Indeed, they have a personal stake in the reputation of the institution for the future of their son or daughter will to some extent depend on that reputation. Graduates of the highly regarded institutions will more likely be employed sooner and in higher level positions than graduates of lesser regarded institutions.

Parental involvement benefits the institution

An institution that invests time, staff, and funds in a properly prepared parents program will reap the benefits in financial assistance, student recruitment, legislative influence, resource information, career guidance, employment leads, and other areas in which the institution has needs that parents can fill. But before you begin your parents program, be sure that you know what you can expect from parents and—perhaps more important—that parents know what to expect from your institution. Your program is not likely to succeed if it is founded on unrealistic expectations and only token in nature.

Who *are* your parents?

A parents program at a large multi-purpose university, because of the size of enrollment, usually includes only the parents or guardians of full-time under-

graduate students. An active parents program with periodic newsletters and several campus and regional events for a constituency of many thousands can be cumbersome and expensive. If your institution has more than 5,000 full-time students, you may need to establish a separate parents program for each undergraduate college or department and have only one institution-wide event a year.

If your institution's enrollment is 5,000 or fewer, your parents program could be institution-wide and might even include parents of graduate students and part-time students.

At a small college (1,000 or fewer), you can design a much more intimate program, and you may want to add additional relatives (especially grandparents) to the mailing list.

The traditional parents program is likely to be most successful at an institution with a large resident enrollment. At a two-year community, junior, or technical college, or at a four-year institution with an enrollment that is primarily commuter, your parents program would need to take a different approach. Parents are not as much involved in the lives of older students. In many cases, the older students are attending on a part-time basis and already have families of their own. An enrollment of many nontraditional-aged students would call for a friends and family type of organization.

Programs to involve parents

The simplest way to involve parents and relatives with the institution is to have a parents day once a year. This is usually scheduled for a Saturday in mid-fall, while the weather is still pleasant in most places. Parents days are often held in conjunction with an established campus event (such as a home football game, concert, or play) or a combination of events including open houses and a dinner with the dean or president.

Some institutions hold more than one parents day, perhaps offering a "Dad's Day" in the fall and a "Mom's Day" in the spring. Institutions with large enrollments may schedule different campus visits for each college or department. Commuter institutions may schedule events for parents and relatives on a periodic basis throughout the year or make a special effort to invite them to regular institutional functions.

More specific involvement for some parents

Your program for parents shouldn't stop at a one-day event. Invite some of the interested parents to serve on an advisory board or committee and on smaller special-interest committees.

At the six institutions I have served, I've found it useful to have an advisory council composed of parents who represent students from all the different segments of campus (academic, housing areas, and the different class years). To form an advisory group, you might recruit members by sending a blanket mailing to invite all parents to apply. Screen the applications to select a group that represents the various campus segments. You may wish to form the initial leadership or nucleus group from parents of scholarship and other special students before, or instead of, sending the blanket mailing to all parents.

You can use the advisory group to help plan campus events for parents and to assist the administration in various support capacities.

Smaller special-interest committees (formed from members of the parents council) can assist in areas identified by the administration, such as the following:

- **Fund raising:** Use a parents committee for peer solicitation of other parents and relatives of current students. Sometimes the committee can also assist in corporate giving and deferred giving.
- **Legislative contacts:** Parents can contact legislators at the local, state, and national levels on matters affecting the institution and higher education. Parents can do this for private institutions as well as public; legislation—especially at the federal level—affects all of higher education.
- **Student recruitment:** All colleges and universities can use help with student recruitment, and satisfied parents are wonderful spokespeople for the institution. But be careful to include parents who *are* satisfied. These parent recruiters should receive proper orientation and be well-informed about the institution.
- **Career guidance:** Parents who are established and successful in their careers can function as resources to provide information to students who are investigating different areas of employment.
- **Employment assistance:** Some parents are in a position to help graduates of the institution by giving them first consideration for openings at their places of employment. They may also be able to help students looking for part-time jobs.
- **Regional representatives:** Some institutions may need volunteers to represent the college or university in specific geographic areas. These parents, who might be selected from the advisory council or the special-interest committees, should receive some orientation and be well-informed about the institution.

Each institution has its own areas in which parent volunteers can help. In all cases, however, the parents should be linked to the appropriate office for proper orientation and coordination.

Which office coordinates the program?

More often than not, the alumni office is responsible for the parents program, and this is appropriate as involved parents can help in the cultivation of the

alumni of the future. Nevertheless, student affairs, community relations, and public relations offices also have a stake in the cultivation of this important constituency. Any one of these offices may be the appropriate coordinator on a particular campus.

Who benefits from the involvement of parents?

Everyone benefits from an active parents program—the parents, the institution, and the students. It's a triple winner.

Parents benefit from the opportunity to participate in the life of the institution and to establish connections with its personnel. Involved parents are informed parents and consequently feel a greater pride and loyalty toward the institution. Their feelings for the institution help them establish a closer bond with their students at the time when these students are leaving home—figuratively as well as literally.

The institution that has an active parents program will realize better overall moral support from parents. In addition, other types of support, such as financial and legislative support, will be easier to obtain. The institution will gain through recruitment assistance and through more favorable publicity and public relations. College or university events will be better attended, not only by parents and other family members but by the students themselves.

Parents who feel pride and loyalty toward the institution and are actively involved with it will convey these feelings to their students. Consequently, the students of involved parents are likely to be better satisfied with the institution and its activities. And, too, they may be better satisfied with their parents. Such students may work harder and do better academically than those whose parents take no interest in the institution.

Conclusion

The institution that reaps the many benefits of a parents program has committed enough money and time for the program to be effective. But if your institution is not in a position to immediately implement a full-fledged program, you could begin a part-time program. Once this effort is in progress and beginning to show some results, you may find institutional funding and support easier to obtain. At the start, however, the scope of your program is determined by the money and staff you can commit to it.

Remember, a program that makes parents feel that they are a part of the institution because of meaningful participation is a wise investment that will produce significant dividends for everyone involved.

Chapter 3

Parents Programs and Philanthropy Along The Lifespan

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Mount Holyoke College

A good education is the most important tool for successful living a parent can provide a child. Quality institutions should be supported (Parent of a current Mount Holyoke student).

Parents have a profound interest in their child's education from the preschool years to graduate school. They see it as a fulfillment of their own best hopes and as a lifelong gift to their child that will pick up where they must leave off. While the parent of a ninth grader plays a different role in that child's life, both at home and at school, than the parent of a college senior, both have much to offer to the institutions engaged in educating their children. And what they have to offer and what they want from these institutions are not as dissimilar as you might think.

Independent schools and colleges can offer parents many opportunities to participate in and support their child's education. The extent and manner in which parents take advantage of these opportunities will depend primarily on the relationship between parent and child and on how well—and how forcefully—the institution presents the options.

In preparing to write this chapter, I conducted a limited unscientific survey of 22 parents whose children have attended or are attending independent secondary schools or four-year colleges and have, for the most part, achieved relatively high levels of academic success. All respondents to my questionnaire were themselves college graduates, many actively involved as alumni with their own alma maters. I also drew on my experience with parents at Mount Holyoke and, previously, at Northfield Mount Hermon School where I was director of alumni and parent programs.

Changing personal relationships

Throughout the years from the child's first day of secondary school to his or her graduation from college, the relationship between parent and child changes continually. These changes are related to the changes occurring as the child moves from childhood through adolescence to young adulthood. In their book, *Letting Go, A Parent's Guide to Today's College Experience,* Karen Coburn and Madge Treeger explain:

> Children have been building since birth an inner core that is exclusively theirs, identifying with significant people in their lives, developing talents, internalizing notions of right and wrong. . . . With the onslaught of puberty,. . .children lose the sense of continuity that they had; confusion sets in; change becomes the norm. The spontaneity and creativity of childhood become the self-conscious inhibition of early adolescence.[1]

The move from "spontaneity," in which parental encouragement and participation are welcome and sought-after elements, to "self-conscious inhibition," in which overt parental involvement is most definitely avoided and even rejected, is a difficult one for both parent and child in even the most stable family situations.

These changes caused by the child's maturation process trigger or coincide with changes that begin to occur in the personal lives of parents as they reach middle age. "A student's developing identity brings his or her parents face to face with their own."[2]

Mid-life brings a need for a more precise focus on personal and vocational goals as well as financial plans. Many parents are attracted, on behalf of their child, to institutions that clearly articulate a mission and set of goals that reinforce their own. Identification with such an institution can provide the parent a personal affirmation that is most welcome at a time when the "letting go" process is shaking old certainties. If engaged in a sensitive manner by the

school or college, the parent can lend helpful support to the institution while the child is free to pursue his or her own unique development.

Changing institutional relationships

In her book, *Necessary Losses,* Judith Viorst writes:

> Parents often have trouble seeing their children as separate people who are moving, psychologically, away. I am told of a mother who, while walking her daughter to school one day, encountered another mother and started to chatter: "We're on our way to school, and we really love the school, and we have a good time, and we've got a wonderful teacher," until she was interrupted by her child, who quite angrily said, "No, Mommy, *we're* not going to school—*I* am."[3]

What *are* the appropriate roles for the parent as the child proceeds from secondary school to college?

Proximity to a day school provides parents many occasions to participate in the child's life at school. Sports events, dramatic productions, concerts, car-pool duty, and so on, offer a window into school life. They give parents the opportunity to become part of the school family through volunteer activities that support curricular and financial needs.

When a child goes to boarding school, the separation from home and family is more marked, and as the school acts *in loco parentis,* the role of the parent becomes less clearly defined. Communication between the school and the parent is imperative at this stage, so that issues requiring parental decision do not come without sufficient warning. A parent I interviewed in my survey observed, "Young people are shaped more frequently at secondary school level; rarely do they face in college the same 'crossroads' experiences."

"Crossroads experiences" might include roommate problems, testing authority, experiments with substance abuse, experiences of failure or of emerging sexual identity, and so on. If the school handles these with grace and skill, providing appropriate support for the child (and the parent, too, if necessary), the resulting bond between the parent and the school becomes strong and durable.

The parent's confidence and trust in the school are as important to the institution as they are to the parent. They allow the parent a much needed "breathing space" in which he or she can begin the difficult readjustment of priorities that must occur as the child grows up and leaves the nest. And when a parent has this kind of trust and confidence, the school is enabled to do what it is best equipped to do—nurture the emergent self of the child in all its social, intellectual, physical, and spiritual dimensions. And as it does this, it can call on parents as willing and able volunteers to meet the needs of the school.

The child's transition to college is the next step along this continuum of separation, and now the parent's role is reduced further. One parent expressed it well when he wrote, "I felt relatively excluded. The colleges seemed preoccupied with 'treating the students as independent adults' which is okay (up to a point), but does that make parents irrelevant?"

Parents are *not* irrelevant, but this tension between the providing parent and the emerging independent child changes the way the parent relates to the institution. While the bond to the child's college is often weaker than that to the school, reflecting the diminishing influence the parent has in the child's life at this stage, it is also possible for a strong relationship to develop, one that is more likely to be based on pragmatic rather than on emotional grounds.

For most parents, the financing of their child's college education is one of the biggest investments they must make. And parents are likely to apply the same standards for evaluation of return on investment to college tuition as to any other investment. Is the college well-managed? Are the "stockholders" kept informed of important developments in the life of the institution? Is the public image of this institution one that supports the values and world view the parent would wish for his or her child?

Parents who believe they have made a "wise investment" delight in telling their friends and colleagues about it. These people may then become interested in the college for their own child. The satisfied parent thereby becomes one of the college's best and most knowledgeable "sales representatives."

Parents often have confidence that the long-term return on their investment—their child's education—will be a satisfying one, but wonder about the short term. "What am I getting out of this investment *now?*" they ask.

Many parents with children in college find great personal satisfaction in returning to the role of student. They consider any opportunity to share in the academic riches being offered to their child to be a golden experience, whether it be a visit to their child's classroom or attendance at a special class for parents taught by a member of the faculty.

While both geographical and psychological distance operate to separate parents from their child's college, most parents will respond, to the best of their ability, if asked to perform specific services for the college or to contribute funds to well-defined causes. And when a parent serves the institution or contributes funds to it—and is appropriately thanked—the bonds of good will that link the parent to the college are strengthened.

Programmatic implications

Parental interest in schools and colleges has important implications for programs and services offered to parents. In the current market-oriented climate, schools and colleges will do well to include parents as "team players" in

meeting their primary needs for students, dollars, and vocational networks. Including parents on the institutional team, however, requires a prior cooperative effort within the institution to determine how parents may be helpful. Some sort of collaborative network involving admissions, student life, communications, and external affairs or development staff is necessary to determine budgetary and programmatic guidelines for parental involvement.

Team players require education and information before they can function effectively. For both secondary schools and colleges, communication with parents should be a primary goal, second only to communication with prospective students. When parents are well-informed about the "ground rules" of the institution and their relationship to it, early on in the process, they can help the student make his or her own personal accommodation to the trauma of leaving home.

An institution may use several methods to inform parents: a parents handbook; a call from a fellow parent in the region to welcome the "new parent" and to answer questions; an orientation program for parents only, which addresses the particular needs of parents. Continuing doses of current information along the way enable parents to feel knowledgeable about the school or college without having to depend on their child for the information. News can come through many different offices and departments at the college, and its coherent delivery to parents depends on the degree of internal coordination within the institution.

Ongoing programs for parents can take many forms. An on-campus weekend for parents is always effective. The institution offers a variety of programs that involve the parent in "hands-on" acquaintance with academic and extracurricular offerings. Parents want to meet the important people in the lives of their children—friends, teachers, coaches, advisers. Parents also enjoy meeting other parents and exchanging perceptions on parenting.

At all levels, parents are impressed by demonstrations of student accomplishment in the arts, in sports, and in various academic disciplines. Such demonstrations attest louder than many printed pages to the success of the institution in accomplishing its mission—*and* to the success of the student.

At the college level, programs that speak to the current interests of both students and parents provide a common ground of communication at a time when this is sometimes difficult. A parent responding to my survey noted the effectiveness of such "real life relevant programs" as "How to Use Your Time Usefully"—a subject of equal interest to parents and students.

Including parents in regional events sponsored by the school or college is another way to offer "in-service training" for prospective volunteers. Access to representatives of the school or college enables parents to establish a relationship to the institution, independent of their child. Interaction with alumni in their home area can also make parents feel that they are indeed part of the team.

Volunteers

As members of the team, parents can perform many useful services for independent schools and colleges. A key to any successful volunteer program is the clear definition of the task to be accomplished, well-established channels of communication, an evaluation of the effort once it is completed, and appropriate acknowledgement of the task well done.

While the changing relationship between parent and child at different stages along the lifespan influences the type of involvement the parent has with the institution, the contributions that parents can make to the institution—whether a school or college—generally fall into three categories.

• **Recruitment and retention:** Parents of students who are having a satisfactory experience at an independent school or college can be the most effective resources for prospective parents. Their presence at receptions or meetings in their home areas and their availability to answer questions are invaluable assets to the admissions effort.

Parental involvement in welcoming new parents is another area for useful service to the institution. Parents can make telephone calls and participate in the orientation program for new parents on campus. One of my survey respondents was most impressed by a program at Williams College: A few days after his child had begun the fall term of freshman year, a parent called to answer any questions he might have and to offer an empathic ear as the reality of separation began to set in.

• **Fund raising:** Both independent schools and colleges enlist parent volunteers in the appeal for annual funds. Parents personalize the request for funds and provide a peer perspective on the institution's need for financial support over and above tuition and fees. Parents often enjoy participating with alumni in institutional phonathons around the country; this experience heightens their pride in the school or college and enables them to support the institution without "intruding" on the school life of their child. And don't forget the effect on the parent of asking others to give: As one parent respondent said, "Being directly involved in fund raising initiates individual giving."

• **Career assistance:** Parents can research and provide vocational sites for summer jobs and internships; they can serve as resources for students interested in learning more about their field of work. The need for career programs is different at a secondary school, where older students may earn spending money by working during the summer or after school, than in a college, where students are seeking experience and opportunities in a chosen field. But these days, parents—and their children—are investigating career options at earlier and earlier points in the adolescent/young adult lifespan; this makes parents ideal agents to seek out and establish opportunities for young people within their own geographical area and sphere of influence.

Philanthropic implications

According to my informal survey as well as my own experience in the field, parents' financial support of their child's school or college is directly related to two factors:

- the parent's satisfaction with the child's experience at the institution, and
- the quality of personal contact and cultivation by the institution of that parent.

Parents responding to my survey also cited other reasons for their support, but none as frequently as these. For example, some parents mentioned their belief in the stated mission of the school or college or a relationship with a faculty member, coach, or adviser. Qualifying for a charitable tax deduction was of more interest to parents of alumni than to parents of current students, but in both cases this ranked low among reasons for giving.

A parent of an alumna wrote that she and her husband felt a "need to continue what was done before us and so to encourage the institution to remain viable into the future." Another parent cited as a reason for continuing support to a child's school or college "the [institution's] capacity to show leadership in education and to adapt to the needs of the times."

When I asked parents how they would allocate their support between their child's independent school and his or her college after graduation, one person replied, "I'm more likely to support a small but vital institution that is doing exciting things, regardless of whether it's secondary or college." Another suggested that her continuing support would be based on the institution's "image as it appears in the press and what we see of its present-day graduates."

While the child is a student at a college or independent school, the parent's relationship to that institution is created and strengthened both by what the institution gives the parent (programs and services) and by what the parent gives the institution (volunteer activities and financial support). The institution that retains a comprehensive profile of the parent's interests, volunteer activities, and contributions, and continues to cultivate the parent according to this profile after the child's graduation will have a good chance of retaining that parent as an ongoing supporter.

Just as when the child was a student, the relationship between the parent and the alumnus has a bearing on the parent's continuing support for the institution. A close relationship prompted a parent of a '73 Mount Holyoke graduate to say "Nothing like having your child engaged in fund raising for her 15th reunion to stimulate you to help out!"

While alumni provide the lifeblood of support for schools and colleges, their parents can also be important supporters. Bill and Camille Cosby recently gave a $20 million gift to Spelman College, the oldest private liberal arts college for black women in the United States. One of their daughters studied there. At Mount Holyoke, a group of parents of students and recent graduates have

undertaken a major effort to fund a portion of a new Campus Center in honor of their daughters.

Increasingly, parents are joining with their children in making gifts larger than either could afford alone to endow scholarships or to fund facilities that reflect their own interests. One parent of an alumna made a life income gift to Mount Holyoke's pooled income fund and then returned her quarterly dividend check as a gift to the college's parents fund.

Such examples of creative philanthropy by parents fuel the impetus by schools and colleges to continue to include parents in their communications, their programming, and their development efforts.

Notes

[1] Karen L. Coburn and Madge L. Treeger, *Letting Go, A Parent's Guide to Today's College Experience* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1988), p. 14.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

[3] Judith Viorst, *Necessary Losses* (New York: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1986), p. 232.

Chapter 4

The Princeton Parents Program: Then and Now

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We wish we had known . . . that the "Princeton experience" shared at graduation time could have been shared much earlier had we come to the campus more often.

This was one of the thoughts parents expressed when the Princeton Parents Project asked 1,500 of them to participate in a survey. The project, funded in part by a three-year $99,500 grant from the Exxon Education Foundation, was designed with two goals in mind: to strengthen communication with and activities for parents of undergraduates, and to acquire information that would be helpful to other institutions.

Editor's note: This article, originally titled "What Parents Want," was published in the June 1985 CURRENTS, a special issue on parents programs. MaryMargaret Halsey was then associate director of the Alumni Council at Princeton where she initiated and coordinated the Princeton Parents Project.

In 1986 the Princeton Parents Project published the results of a review of parents programs throughout the higher education community. As these findings helped shape and organize the contents of this book, we felt it was imperative to include Halsey's description of the Princeton Parents Project and of the parents program developed at Princeton in accordance with the findings of the project.

In the five years since this article was written, however, the parents program at Princeton has undergone change, primarily consolidation and streamlining in areas where programming was straining resources. We asked the author to comment on Princeton's parents program as it exists today. Her response follows the original article.

Prior to the project, which began in the fall of 1983, Princeton's program for parents was similar to those at many other institutions. It had an anchor in development and oars in several other departments.

Princeton's first parents organization, the Parents Committee, started in 1948. That year, 429 parents contributed $52,568 to the Parents Fund. The first Freshman Parents Day, one of the university's earliest non-fund-raising programs for parents, took place in 1966. And a tabloid, *Princeton Parents News*, first rolled off the press in February 1978. As parents responded to these and other initiatives, more campus departments began providing information to and developing programs for them.

For all its strong points, Princeton's overall parents program was highly decentralized, vastly underdeveloped, and heavily oriented toward fund raising. So, in 1983, with the encouragement of a strong Parents Committee chair, we set out to work these elements—and others—into a comprehensive program. We launched the Princeton Parents Project and set out to discover who our parents were and what they wanted from us.

The first activities of our project took several steps. We conducted an inventory of programs for parents at other institutions, created a broad new parents organization, did some modest experimentation with other kinds of communication and new programs, and mailed out a survey.

The survey questionnaire (including a self-addressed reply envelope) went to 1,499 parents of Princetonians in the classes of 1981 through 1987.

What the survey told us

We knew even before we started that what parents want from a parents program is information and involvement. . .but what kind and how much? The answers we got may apply to your institution as well.

At the time of the survey, parents received their information about Princeton through many channels, the main one being their own children. Others included their children's friends, other parents of Princetonians, and alumni in their area. Information also traveled to parents in the form of an annual letter from the dean of the college, tuition bills, and letters from various departments.

Parents told us that they would like to receive more information—more "personal communications"—in any form. They also said that they wanted communications that were warm and personal. They wanted Princeton to show appreciation for the sacrifices they make to send a daughter or son to the university, and for that child's contributions to Princeton.

The survey's questions about publications and activities for parents gave us specific information about their ideas on "personal communications."

• **Publications:** The topics parents preferred for publications included: profiles of faculty and students (69 percent) and their academic pursuits (80

percent); the university's plans (76 percent); campus life (69 percent); performing arts (40 percent); and sports (40 percent). The parents of freshmen and sophomores proved particularly eager for information, and they read Princeton publications more regularly.

• **Activities:** Activities of interest to parents can occur either on campus or in their hometowns.

When parents come to Princeton they want most to learn about the curriculum and academic advising (60 percent). Most of them (86 percent) want to attend classes—especially to see their children in action. Parents are keenly interested in presentations about career advising (59 percent) and financial aid (58 percent). They want to tour the museum (80 percent), watch arts performances (78 percent), and attend sports events (75 percent). Parents would also like to meet faculty, but they want to socialize with other parents and students as well.

When traveling to Princeton's campus, four out of five parents from nearby states—New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania—like a one-day event, preferably on a Saturday in the fall. One-day or longer events satisfy parents from all other regions. Most parents (59 percent) prefer separate events for each class.

In their home communities, parents prefer attending programs featuring faculty speakers or student groups from the campus. Although a third of those parents were interested in attending a local lecture or a musical or dramatic performance, only one out of six wanted to attend a regular local alumni gathering.

To us at Princeton, this means that our alumni office should understand that parents generally are not interested in the full range of alumni activities. On the other hand, they are eager to be a part of the audience when the university comes to town. To appear more welcoming to parents, the Princeton Alumni Association of New England dropped "alumni" from its name to become simply the Princeton Association of New England.

Of course, parents also become involved in the life of the university by volunteering to help the institution. Over half of our respondents said they would help recruit students, 30 percent said they would help with career advising, and 33 percent said they would be willing to host students. Many institutions already use parent volunteers in this manner.

Why are parents so interested in becoming involved? We think it's because they are proud of their children—and their choices. In many cases they're grateful for what our institutions are giving or have given them. Information and involvement help parents feel less anxious about their children's years at college, about their own feelings of separation, and about their financial sacrifices. Even if parents have different alma maters of their own, an active relationship with their children's institution can be an invigorating complement. It can also renew their interest in higher education in general.

The results of our survey tell us a lot about what parents want—much of which is not surprising. But the results also tell us what parents *don't* want.

Parents do not want the bulk of their mail to be about money—aid, bills, tuition increases, fund raising. As difficult as it may be, it is essential to strike a balance. This is true even if the only way to keep pace with increasing appeals is to make a major effort to increase the quantity and quality of the non-money-oriented mail.

Changes we've made

Our assessments at Princeton have led us to allocate more staff and financial resources for the personal communication parents want.

We've begun designing a parents handbook, expanded the *Princeton Parents News* from four pages to eight, and started sending parents the president's annual report.

By sending a free sample of the alumni magazine and offering a discounted subscription rate, we have encouraged parents to subscribe to that publication. In the *Princeton Parents News* we print subscription order forms for the university's weekly bulletin and the student newspaper.

As far as activities are concerned, we have expanded and embellished traditional university events while keeping parents' preferences in mind. These events include freshman orientation, Freshman Parents Day, Alumni Day, Princeton Today (briefing) programs, and commencement. In addition, we will sponsor a special day for parents of sophomores. We have also encouraged much greater involvement by parents in various regional events and activities.

The new Princeton Parents Association, to which all parents automatically belong from the moment their child enters Princeton until at least five years after their child graduates, is governed by a Parents Council.

The Parents Council includes a Class Programs Committee. The committee, made up of representatives of each of the four undergraduate classes, assists with on-campus programs and reviews publications. The Parents Council also includes a Regional Programs Committee that provides leadership and direction for the many local parents groups across the country, and a Parents Fund Committee that seeks to raise unrestricted gifts for Princeton with credit for the gift awarded to the child's class.

Other members of the Council include the past several chairs of the association and a representative from the Alumni Council. This structure, similar to that of our alumni association, reflects Princeton's tradition of organizing both by class and by region.

Planning your program

In addition to our discoveries about what parents do and don't want, we also learned some critical lessons about planning, organizing, and coordinating a

parents program. Here are the main questions you should ask when you set up a parents program:

- How is the institution structured and how does it function? Who is responsible for different areas of parent involvement?
- What are the social and economic characteristics of the student body and its parents?
- What is to be the purpose of the parents program?
- What resources can the institution commit to the maintenance of a parents organization?
- What does the institution already offer in existing programs for students and their parents? What new programs are necessary or possible?
- What is the cycle of critical decisions that students will make during their years at the institution?
- How is the alumni association organized? What can it offer parents? What can parents offer it?

Your answers to these questions will help to determine the nature and goals of your parents program.

But can we afford it?

An effective, comprehensive parents program requires a significant investment. Because money is always scarce, we have asked ourselves whether we—or any other institution—can afford to support such a program.

Yet that question always seems to come back in another form: Can we really afford *not* to inform and involve our parents?

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The Princeton Parents Program Today

Five years after building a foundation for our programs for parents at Princeton and then expanding it, we have taken a hard look at the activities, administrative model, volunteer structure, and the level of support we can realistically provide for these programs. We gave ourselves the following report card:

- "A" for regional activities where, depending on the alumni and parent leadership, parents are actively involved in admission telethons, receptions, summer job and career advising, community service, hosting university travelers, encouraging parents to attend events and to join the regional clubs, and supporting one another through parent-to-parent talks. The enormous success of a recent Princeton Regional Conference in Dallas was largely due to the parent volunteers. They organized and staffed registration and a coffee hour

with the dean and spread their enthusiasm for Princeton throughout the conference.

• "B" for volunteer structure where we have identified some great volunteers but need to improve our communication with and service to them. "B" for campus events that were successful but strained resources.

• "C" for our overly complex, inefficient administrative model.

Having taken stock, we plan to continue some aspects of our program, consolidate some, and expand others. Those elements that will continue include the publications, the Parents Fund, and the events on campus for parents of freshmen and seniors.

The university will continue to distribute the *Princeton Parents* newsletter regularly to Princeton Parents Association members. The *Parents Handbook* will be mailed during the summer to all parents of incoming freshmen. The Parents Fund Committee will continue its important work as part of the National Annual Giving Committee. Participation in the Fund has increased. We've added more telethons and class committees. Freshman Parents Day and special programs for parents during the Freshman Arrival Days will continue with oversight from the dean of the college.

To increase administrative effectiveness, we will consolidate the volunteer organization. The Princeton Parents Association will continue to include all current parents, parents of first-year graduates, and other parents actively engaged with Princeton. We will not continue the Parents Council or its Executive Committee; instead, regional and class representatives will work directly with the chair of the Parents Association. This should give more meaning to that position. Also, the chair of the association and at least one additional representative will continue to serve as ex-officio members of the Alumni Council Executive Committee.

Instead of a Campus Committee (which evolved from the original Class Committee formed in 1985 to host campus events), we plan to designate class representatives as needed to work directly with the undergraduate class officers and the Alumni Council staff. In addition to hosting any campus event for the classes, these representatives may help undergraduates with projects and serve as a communications link with other parents. We see this as not only a way for parents to be involved with campus programs but, importantly, as a way to strengthen the undergraduate classes and parents' identification with them.

The primary area we are expanding is the regional parents program. We hope to increase the number of parents and to solidify their position and role within the local associations. Many of the Princeton alumni clubs have designated parent representatives for their governing boards, offered membership to parents, and invited them to participate in club events featuring university speakers as well as other appropriate activities.

We will ask clubs to sponsor activities for parents as complementary components of their overall programs. Encouraged by the parent representatives, parents will be involved in such parent-alumni projects as yield parties for

admitted students, admission telethons and other student recruitment efforts, summer job and career advising, community service, and so on. Alumni Council staff can offer direct support to parents and the activities of the regional clubs and associations.

Administrative responsibilities have been separated. The Alumni Council, which works directly with regional alumni clubs and associations and, in a more limited way, with undergraduate class officers, will oversee the Princeton Parents Association volunteer organization and its activities, particularly in the regions. On-campus programming for parents will be consolidated under the office of the dean of the college. This includes Freshman Arrival Days and Freshman Parents Day, commencement (including Operation Mattress, which provides low-cost on-campus housing for parents during commencement activities), and additional opportunities for informal visits to campus. We will not continue the formal Sophomore Parents Day or the separate Junior Parents Program on Alumni Day (although parents are always welcome to participate in Alumni Day or any other campus events).

While these special days have been successful in attracting parents to campus and providing valuable information, they are expensive and their complex schedules tax staffing resources. The dean of the college can work directly with the masters of the residential colleges and other faculty and administrators to design less elaborate programs that provide an acceptable way for parents to be present on campus and that respond to the needs of parents and students.

Streamlining the volunteer structure and staffing in this way should accomplish two important goals:

- alleviate a growing administrative burden in supporting the organization; separating and clarifying administrative responsibilities should yield more effective programming with more efficient use of resources.
- limit the growing appetite of parent volunteers; while we appreciate their interest and desire for more activities, we must contain our costs. We will continue to review campus events targeted for parents and consider additional ways to "legitimize" parents' presence on campus.

Princeton is fortunate to have many strong regional associations, and we believe that we can integrate parents more fully into the Princeton family if we concentrate on maintaining parent representation in the local club system and coordinating activities for parents as complementary components of the overall club program.

We continue to believe that parents are very special people at Princeton. They are extremely important to the smooth functioning of a student's academic and residential life as well as to the future of the university and its ability to recruit new students, raise funds, and influence educational policy. Parents' enthusiasm can be both contagious and limitless; it can also strain resources. But even in an era of retrenchment, it would be foolish to neglect our parents. We must, however, find satisfying ways to incorporate programming for them as much as possible into existing structures and to address their special needs, primarily through communications.

Section 2

Events for Parents

Chapter 5

Creating a New Tradition: Parents Day at the University of Chicago

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Preparations are now under way for the University of Chicago's Centennial Celebration, but 1988 marked only the sixth annual Parents Day. How did a college that had always ignored—if not disparaged—special weekend programs for visiting parents finally break with tradition and experiment with an event considered standard on most other campuses?

Enthusiasm for a Parents Day at the College of the University of Chicago began to surface in the early 1980s, and the increasing interest of people from several offices resulted in our very first Parents Day in 1983. Faculty, the dean of the college, the dean of admissions, and advisers and administrators from the dean of students office and the development office all helped to legitimize, plan, and support the effort.

Faculty and administrators who had visited their own college-age children during parents days at campuses from coast to coast returned to Chicago with enthusiastic reports and warm feelings about their experiences. The students had taken great pride in showing their parents around and introducing roommates and friends, faculty and advisers. Although the nature and the length of the event varied from school to school, most returning participants were eager to create an original and unique Parents Day program for the University of Chicago.

Up to this point, the only invitations we extended to parents were for freshman orientation and graduation. We rarely invited parents to anything between these two great events. Although a very active group of local parents participated in lunches before home football games, parents were not regularly present at any other campus events.

At this time, the dean of the college and the dean of admissions were interested in increasing the national visibility of the college so that the predicted decrease in college-age students would not result in decreased enrollment. When they heard glowing reports from members of our community who had visited other campuses, they began to see the potential for parents of our students to act as public relations representatives in their hometowns.

Parents who had visited Chicago and had participated in our Parents Day program would undoubtedly spread the word to their friends and neighbors back home. Bringing parents to campus for an annual Parents Day would increase their understanding of Chicago's programs and make them better able to promote the college to prospective students and their parents, as well as to their own students.

College advisers had frequently expressed the feeling that many parents, especially those of first-generation college students, did not fully understand the nature of the educational experience their children had chosen. In this time of economic instability and uncertain job opportunities, many parents were concerned about Chicago's rigorous liberal arts emphasis and its downplaying of preprofessional training. As a result, we felt, some parents were not as supportive of their students as they should be, especially when they received first-quarter grades, which often were not as good as those received in high school.

Advisers were eager to counsel parents on the value of the liberal arts education and the rationale behind Chicago's uninflated grading system and the Common Core Curriculum (the role of which is to connect the entire universe of knowledge).

Parents also seemed to be unaware of the numerous campus resources available to students: job opportunities on and off campus, internships and "time-off" job counseling, academic tutoring, scholarships and fellowship services, research positions, and personal counseling. Advisers hoped that if parents knew about these resources, they would urge students to use them.

And lastly, the development office saw the establishment of a Parents Day as an opportunity to cultivate a new source of funding. In the past we asked parents to do just one thing: pay the bills. If parents were asked to play a more active role and to be involved in the college's mission, might they not become willing contributors beyond the cost of tuition?

Although a Parents Fund had been established in 1980 by the development office and a group of concerned parents who felt that parents *should* be encouraged to give to the institution, it had been only moderately successful. The co-chairs of the University of Chicago's Parents Committee, as this group

began to call itself, hoped that a Parents Day would help publicize the Parents Fund and the work of the Parents Committee.

At Chicago, where interdisciplinary research combined with teaching has always been a tradition, it was a coalition of staff members from several different offices who began to consider the possibility of a "Chicago-style" Parents Day. Our first meeting in February 1983 included a former dean of students in the college, the associate dean of students in the college, the director of the Parents Fund, the national co-chairs of the Parents Fund, and the director of orientation. We agreed to hold our first Parents Day in October. As director of orientation, I was selected to develop and implement the program, which would be self-supporting except for small contributions from the development and orientation offices. I would depend on the volunteer services of faculty, administrators, and student orientation aids to run the program.

Planning the program

After deciding that the goal of our Parents Day would be to expose parents to the unique character of the Core Curriculum, we knew we needed to plan the day around the classroom experience. In our Core courses, all disciplines of the university come together in a common dialogue—primarily in small discussion classes. Distinguished faculty from all departments were asked not only to model for parents the kind of conversation that is usual in these classes, but to actively engage parents in the dialogue. Academics, not football and frolicking, would be the focus of the day.

Our first Parents Day began with a continental breakfast, which parents shared with faculty, administrators, and representatives from many campus resource areas (campus ministers, advisers, housing staff, the offices of financial aid and career and placement services, student activities, the university student health service, and the student mental health clinic).

After breakfast, parents chose two 50-minute model classes from the many different topics within each academic division. Faculty in the social sciences and humanities presented textual analysis and discussion of short readings; some of the choices were "Narrative in Faulkner and *The Odyssey*" and "Reading Thucydides." Faculty in the biological and physical sciences lectured on such topics as "Cancer in Embryology" and "Tornadoes and Other Severe Storms" and then were open to questions from the parents. Student orientation aids acted as guides, escorting parents to classrooms all over the campus.

Parents ate lunch in the residence halls with the resident masters, resident heads, and assistants, who live in the halls with the students. We hoped that this meal would discredit a "fact" reported by countless students—that institutional food is inedible.

We scheduled a flexible and varied afternoon. Parents could attend, with or without their children, as many or as few of the following activities as they desired:

- To show parents Chicago's extraordinary physical plant and the many cultural attractions on campus, we conducted tours of the campus, the Crerar Science Library, the David and Alfred Smart Art Gallery, the Kersten Physics Teaching Center and Observatory, Regenstein Library, the Oriental Institute, the Renaissance Society Gallery, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel and Carillon, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House.
- To acquaint parents with the different services and resources on campus, we scheduled informational meetings with staff from the offices of financial aid, the college dean of students, and career and placement services. Parents could also talk individually with financial aid officers, advisers, and counselors.
- We listed all the athletic (intramural and varsity), musical, and theatrical events (both student and professional) in the day's program so that parents could attend activities of interest.

The closing reception at the faculty club gave parents one more opportunity to meet with faculty, administrators, and support staff and to mix with other parents before taking their children out to dinner—probably the highlight of the day for many students!

Evaluation and evolution of the program

The success of that first, somewhat experimental Parents Day was gratifying. The model classes turned out to be the high point of the day; although some parents were not able to attend their first choices, all were enthusiastic about their classroom experiences. Some of our most prestigious professors had volunteered for the model classes, and they were impressed with their adult students. Discussions begun in the classrooms continued at the noon meal (as frequently happens with Chicago students), and many parents expressed surprise at how much excitement could be engendered by subjects such as Plato's *Republic,* the enserfment of the Russian peasantry, and the structure of matter.

While slightly under 10 percent of our students received visits from their parents on our first Parents Day, to our surprise attendance was not limited to local parents. New York and Washington, D.C., were represented almost as heavily as Michigan and Wisconsin; and some parents came from as far away as Florida and California.

Evaluating and then planning for the next year's program began immediately. Staff and administrators who had enjoyed their interchanges with parents were eager to repeat and expand upon offerings for the next year. University President Hanna Holborn Gray and Dean of the College Donald N. Levine agreed to address the parents after the breakfast reception. The Parents Committee

volunteered to host roundtable discussions with advisers, deans, financial aid officers, and housing staff personnel. And instead of ending Parents Day with a large gathering at the faculty club, we felt it would add a special personal touch if the resident masters held receptions in their apartments for parents and their students, faculty, and administrators.

We also decided to offer free admission to Parents Day for students' younger siblings in hopes of encouraging them to consider the University of Chicago when it was time for them to select a college.

Conclusion

While we probably couldn't prove a one-to-one correlation between Parents Day and successes in admissions, retention rate, and development results, our applications for admission and our acceptance rates have increased for each of the last four years, retention has improved, the Parents Committee has grown to 70 members, a new committee has been started in New York, and a record-breaking 1,800 parents gave $155,000 through the Parents Fund last year.

And our Parents Day is popular. We began with just over 200 participants in 1983; in 1988 over 700 parents and siblings attended. Although there is always a greater proportion of freshman parents than of any other class, all classes are represented, and many parents are "repeaters." Obviously, we cram so much into our Parents Day that once is not enough.

We shouldn't be surprised at our success. After all, most parents of students who make it into selective colleges have been involved heavily in their children's education since preschool days; it is unlikely that they will lose interest now, just because the kids have gone away to college.

Parents who are paying such high tuition bills want to know what their children are getting for the money and what their prospects will be upon graduation. They have important questions to ask us: How can this college presume to charge so much more than other institutions? Why isn't Johnny at the top of his class here as he was in high school? Does it mean he isn't studying or that he isn't being taught anything? And what is the college doing about it? Where can Johnny go to get help?

The investment in a child's college education is not just financial; often the hopes and dreams of parents and extended family are riding on the success of the student. As these young adults pull away from their parents, demanding independence and privacy, they continue to need unquestioning love and support. Parents must walk a tightrope, trying not to intrude when they aren't wanted but to "be there" when they are. As a result they often find themselves left out of the college experience altogether, either by the student's wish to be independent or by their own reluctance to interfere. When we provide a formal

visiting day for parents, we legitimize their presence on campus and their involvement in their student's life.

And let's not forget our mission; education is not just for the young. Chicago calls itself the teacher of teachers, and parents are the first, the most influential, and—we hope—the best teachers of our youth. At the last several Parents Days, President Gray has praised the assembled parents for having raised young people with the courage to select the University of Chicago.

The intellectual stimulation offered in the model classes has proved to be as exciting and challenging to the parents as it is to the students who have committed themselves to four years of our rigorous program. I believe we have a commitment to these parents as well as to our students; let us continue to educate them on Parents Day.

Chapter 6

Parents Weekend: The Centerpiece Of a Parents Program

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Why hold a parents weekend? Parents weekend is the centerpiece of a parents program. If your institution is unable to make a commitment to a full-fledged parents program that includes a parents council and parent involvement in volunteer activities, setting aside a weekend of events for parents and calling it parents weekend can accomplish a great deal in furthering relationships with this important constituency.

If staff time and money are scarce, parents weekend may constitute your entire parents program. Aside from ongoing solicitation activities, a parents weekend is the perfect beginning for a parents program.

Inviting parents to spend a weekend at your campus is a natural way to bring parents closer to the institution. It provides an opportunity for your institution to demonstrate its strengths: faculty, students, facilities, and special programs. Properly impressed parents can become some of your best boosters for recruiting students, raising money, and providing contacts, and a parents weekend is the most dynamic way to impress them. Holding a parents weekend provides an opportunity for your development office to meet and cultivate prospective parent donors. It can be the perfect time for the president to express the institution's appreciation for the sacrifices families may be making to send their children to your institution. Finally, a parents weekend becomes another

opportunity to inform parents of institutional services available to students with academic or personal problems or needs.

Why do parents come to a parents weekend? Parents find it hard to relinquish completely their important role in their child's life—nor should they have to. Some parents—especially those of freshmen who are first or only children—are probably suffering separation pangs. If their student is having difficulties, parents weekend gives these parents an opportunity to meet with the student's academic adviser or other student services personnel who might be able to help. In any case, parents want to get a sense of the place in which they are investing so much money and where their child will live for the next four years. They want to visit classes, meet professors, and get acquainted with the student's friends and with other parents.

Students enjoy parents weekend also. After 18 years of living in their parents' world, parents weekend gives students the chance to show off their own sphere.

But perhaps the most important reason for a parents weekend is that it's fun for parents; it enables them to experience college life today and, for many, it's a chance to relive their own college days.

Who will organize parents weekend?

Unless your institution has a director of parents programs, organizing this event may fall to one of several already existing units of the administration:

- the alumni office;
- the development office;
- the president's office; or
- the student services/student union.

On most campuses, everyone is already overworked and overextended, but somewhere this important event for an important constituency should find a home. Exactly where this is will depend on your particular institution.

Whoever this responsibility falls to should have "parents" in his or her title. This demonstrates to parents—and to the institution—the importance of the program.

When to hold the weekend

Expediency usually dictates when to hold a parents weekend. First and foremost, find out when the president is available. Then look for a weekend in which an attractive student event—such as a student concert, home athletic contest, or theater production—is scheduled. Events such as these, which involve student performances, are most likely to bring parents to campus. But be careful not to schedule the event for a weekend in which your office is

holding another event. For instance, if yours is the alumni office, schedule parents weekend some distance from homecoming and reunion weekend. No department, however efficient and energetic, should have to organize back-to-back big weekends.

If your institution has a large local student population, you might consider a parents day rather than a whole weekend. But if your students come from all over, a weekend in fall or spring is usually the best. Remember to check the academic calendar; students won't want to see their parents the weekend before midterms or final exams. The middle of the semester is ideal, not too close to when students have just returned from visits home.

An institution with an enrollment over 5,000 might hold two weekends, one in the spring for parents of freshmen and one in the fall for parents of upperclassmen. On a typical parents weekend, almost one-half of the parents attending will be parents of freshmen. Parents of freshmen are apt to be particularly anxious, and they enjoy the chance to visit campus and be reassured. Since many of these parents bring their freshmen to campus in September, some would probably prefer to return in the spring, rather than just a month later. On the other hand, if they're anxious, some won't want to wait until the year is almost over.

Upperclassmen usually come to campus in the fall by themselves. And so a fall weekend is probably better for their parents, especially parents of seniors who will be coming to campus in the late spring or summer for graduation.

Finally, whether you hold a full weekend or a one-day event, plan for parents to attend regularly scheduled classes. If your institution does not schedule Saturday classes, start your weekend Friday morning to take advantage of a full day of classes. While parents may enjoy a "parents college"—special lectures and courses arranged just for them—this cannot take the place of a real class with real students.

When you are scheduling the weekend, be sure to consider the local housing situation. You may need to call local hotels and motels to make sure space is available and that they have not booked large conventions the same weekend. And don't forget to think of weather and climate. Try to schedule your spring weekend when the daffodils or flowering trees are in bloom. "Acts of God" can always interfere with your plans, but do the best you can to take advantage of the best season in your locale.

Now that you've selected two or three possible dates, consult the institution's master calendar to see if there are any conflicts, and then consult with all the departments who will be involved in the weekend. You don't want to discover, when it's too late, that Buildings and Grounds will be digging up the sidewalks in front of the auditorium the day before your weekend.

Once you've reached a consensus and have finalized the date, you can begin to plan. If you set the date at least six months in the future and preferably a year, you will have enough time to plan and prepare. (The checklist at the end of this chapter outlines the many steps involved.)

Organizing to plan: The parents weekend committee

First, form a working committee of representatives of the departments that will be involved in the weekend. Try to involve everyone who will have specific responsibilities for the event; if these people have an active role in the planning process, they will have an investment in making the weekend a success.

Who sits on your parents weekend committee will be determined in part by what activities you plan and how your institution is organized. You might include people from the following areas:

- president's office;
- development office;
- residential life;
- student activities;
- Student Alumni Association (or some student representatives if you don't have an SAA);
- buildings and grounds;
- transportation;
- audio-visual;
- dean of students office;
- academic dean's office;
- advising;
- career development;
- financial aid;
- mail services;
- communications, publications, and graphic services; and
- catering/food service.

Developing a budget

Once you know what activities you will include in your weekend, you can develop a budget. You can estimate certain costs: printing and postage to send notices to parents; printing handouts, schedules, and tickets; overtime for staff and students who work on the weekend; hospitality expenses (receptions, etc.); meals and special events such as concerts; and so on. Use your committee to research each of the costs and work together to develop a consolidated budget. Get agreement from each department if costs are to be parceled out among different departments.

Staffing

The parents weekend committee must also decide who will do what: Who will design the mailings, who will see that they are printed and mailed, who will

coordinate publicity, who will take reservations, who will staff the weekend (both professional staff and clerical staff). These tasks can be done by one department, or they can be distributed among the members of the committee. The important point here is that everyone knows exactly what he or she is supposed to do and when, and that all have accepted these assignments.

Publicity

Parents are busy people. They need to know as soon as possible when the weekend will be. If you can plan far enough ahead, you can announce next year's dates at this year's weekend. Include the dates in the mailings that go to freshmen as soon as they accept the institution's offer of admission and repeat the dates in subsequent communications to them. Students need to know when their parents will visit, and you can't always depend on timely communication between parents and students. Include the dates in any mailings to freshman parents. For parents of upperclassmen, you can send a postcard six months before the weekend just to tell them the dates.

If housing near your campus is tight, you might remind parents that they need to make reservations early. Include housing suggestions in your preliminary mailing.

Your final mailing, which includes a detailed schedule of events, the reservation form, and details about housing (if appropriate), should arrive six weeks before the weekend. Lead time is essential if parents need to return a form and a check to purchase tickets for meals or other special events.

If you are asking parents to make reservations for meals, you need to plan the menu in advance so that you know how much to charge. This means working with your catering department (or an outside caterer) eight to nine weeks before the weekend. If you're offering parents on-campus housing, you need to have arranged that by the time of your final mailing so you can include room reservation forms. If you have been able to negotiate special parents weekend rates at nearby hotels and motels, include that information in the final mailing, but avoid being the agent for room reservations unless you are using on-campus housing. If so, keep housing tasks in mind when you are assigning clerical duties.

Getting down to detail

Once your schedule for mailings is on target, make clerical staff assignments for the weekend; determine who will handle the nitty-gritty details. Decide how registration should be handled, which individual will record acceptances and deposit checks, who will be alert to oversold events, and who will receive

phone calls about housing and other questions. The same office that handles preregistration should handle registration during the weekend.

You will need to establish a central headquarters for the weekend. Parents need a place they can drop by to ask questions or to purchase tickets for activities and meals.

Staff your headquarters with people who know the campus and the institution's procedures. Post—and publicize—the hours that the headquarters will be open. Make sure staff members have a telephone book and a campus directory so that if they can't answer a question or solve a problem, they can contact the person or office that can.

In addition to workers for registration, you will also need people to direct parents to the right buildings and rooms, to take tickets, to introduce speakers, and to perform many other chores. You may want to ask students to do some of these tasks; if you have an active parents association, ask for volunteers to help during the weekend. You will also need faculty and staff members to attend receptions and other social events. Each major event should have a professional staff person on hand to prevent—or deal with—last-minute snags.

What kinds of events should occur on a parents weekend?

Parents want to meet those people who are important to the student and to the institution. Parents also want information about the institution and about their student's experiences there. You can fulfill these needs in both formal and informal (social) settings.

Although deans and other administrators are important and should have a role in your parents weekend, give the most prominent place to the person who oversees the whole institution—the president. He or she might hold a reception for parents or make a formal presentation on the exciting developments at your institution. While a reception provides opportunities for many of the parents to meet and talk to the president, the presentation format gives all the parents a chance to hear what he or she has to say. If you are planning such a presentation, leave plenty of time for questions, especially if your president is good at answering them.

For more specific problems and concerns, a panel of deans is one of the best ways for parents to get the answers to their questions, especially questions about academic and student life. Be sure the deans include information on new academic programs.

Parents also appreciate a session on institutional services for students—career services, financial aid, advising systems, dormitory life, new construction and buildings, and special student support services. Use other administrators for these sessions: the director of financial aid, the career development and placement director, people from the residential life and services division.

Next to the president, parents are most anxious to meet their student's professors. Arrange formal contact with the faculty, either through existing classes or through special lectures in a parents college. In this way you can highlight some of your faculty superstars and can introduce parents to new areas of the curriculum. Parents also appreciate meeting faculty socially. Schedule a time for students to invite a favorite professor to have dinner in the student dining hall with them and their parents.

Parents want to meet the student's friends and roommates. This could be an informal get-together in a small setting, such as a dormitory lounge.

And, of course, be sure to allow plenty of free time so that parents can visit privately with students, take them off campus, or—always a favorite among students—treat them to a meal in an expensive restaurant. Don't be surprised if some parents choose to spend most of the weekend with their student in unstructured ways; others will attend every event you schedule.

If you have a parents association, allow time for its annual meeting and for special presentations by parent leaders. Involve association leaders in as many ways as you can during the weekend; this will enhance their visibility.

Finally, remember that parents want to share in the life of the institution for the brief time they are there. Be aware of what's happening on your campus and plan ways to involve parents. Include on the final schedule all campus-wide events that would be appropriate for parents to attend, with or without the student. This would include concerts, especially those given by faculty or students; theater productions; sporting events; religious services; and student or community activities such as a street fair, picnic, or barbeque.

Sometimes events in a smaller setting are the most successful; with the help of the residential life staff and your student committee members, explore the possibility of holding small dinners, coffees, or gatherings for students (and their parents) who are involved in various activities, such as sports, the student newspaper, fraternities, sororities, and so on.

How do you know it was a success?

It may not be very scientific, but the easiest way to find out whether your parents weekend was a success is to ask. You can do this by passing out evaluation forms and asking parents to rate events, meals, accommodations, and pre-weekend information. Provide plenty of space for comments and suggestions. Informal feedback from people during the weekend, while even less scientific, can also be very helpful.

When you have reviewed the responses on the evaluation forms, you should convene the parents weekend committee and debrief with all the staff so that you can plan improvements for next year while everyone's impressions are still fresh.

Aftermath

Because you and your office were highly visible during the weekend, you will find that after it's over, parents will write or call you with questions. (This is just one of the many good reasons to have an office just for parents programs.)

During the course of the weekend, you probably accumulated a series of notes to check on for parents—one parent sent a tuition payment that was lost in the mail, another wants information about the institution's junior year abroad, and so on.

Follow-up tasks such as these take time and sometimes require the assistance of staff or of other departments. And some of the comments on the evaluation forms need a response. In addition, you have to write thank-you notes to parent and student volunteers, faculty, staff, deans, and everybody else who gave of their weekend to make the event a success.

Conclusion

The weekend is over, the dates are already set for next year's event, and soon it will be time to begin planning. Of all the constituencies connected with an educational institution, parents can be the nicest.

The attitude of parents depends largely on the experience of their student at your institution. For the most part, these attitudes are positive, and even though students might complain about the food or too much work, parents usually don't take these complaints too seriously. Most are eager to investigate the student environment for themselves before passing judgment, and, as a rule, they are happy with the institution and their student's experiences there.

If you can plan and implement a weekend that demonstrates the educational vitality of your institution as well as the caring and support that each student receives, you will have a successful event, happy and supportive parents, and a healthier institution.

Checklist for Parents Weekend

You can use this checklist to schedule the many steps involved in preparing for a parents weekend.

A year or more ahead

1. Establish dates and officially notify the president's office. (Date has already been cleared with this office.)
2. Check on available housing. Reserve block of rooms if appropriate.

Six months before

1. Plan the general program.
2. Invite presenters (deans, staff, faculty, etc.).
3. Work with student activities office to develop appropriate programming for parents. .
4. Work with campus catering/food service to set menus and get prices where necessary.
5. Send out "Save These Dates for Parents Weekend" notice.

Five months before

1. Prepare all facility reservation forms.
2. Continue to pin down details of program.

Four months before

1. If preliminary postcard is needed, order labels (check with registrar's office to obtain accurate student enrollment list). Print and mail postcard.
2. Reconfirm housing arrangements.
3. Write brochure.
4. Have brochure designed.
5. Have brochure printed.

Three months before

1. Order labels and mail brochure.
2. Reconfirm facility reservation.
3. Send highlighted brochures to all presenters and committee members.
4. Update weekend schedule. Include details about events and add any new events.
5. Begin preparing the weekend schedule for printing.
6. Arrange for coffee breaks between morning workshops or events.
7. Compose, design, and print reservation confirmation cards.

One month before

1. Prepare and send notice to students about weekend.
2. Print any special tickets (for meals, entertainment, etc.) as necessary.

3. Send notice of the weekend to faculty so they know parents may be visiting their classes.
4. Compile for parents a list of Friday and Saturday classes. Duplicate list.
5. Compile and reproduce list of local restaurants.
6. Order extra copies of the weekly calendar of institutional events.
7. Order campus maps.
8. Devise, print, and duplicate evaluation sheet.
9. Write and send invitations to faculty/staff to attend events.
10. Devise sign-in system so you can keep track of parents' arrival. Include a space for parents to note their student's year.

Two weeks before

1. Order audio-visual equipment.
2. Remind communications office to prepare materials for display on the registration tables and bulletin boards.
3. Notify security about the weekend so that parents' cars will not be ticketed.
4. Send reminder notes to presenters with time, place, and details of their assignment.
5. Work out staffing schedule for registration desk.
6. Give counts to food service/catering service.
7. Prepare signs.
8. Confirm registration headquarters arrangements: tables, markers, materials, bulletin boards, etc. Arrange for cash box and change.

One week before

1. Check catering details.
2. Print weekend schedules. You should print about a third more than the number you expect to attend.

Chapter 7

Organizing a Parents Weekend from Start To Finish

Deborah A. Duncan
Coordinator, Parents Weekend
Stanford University

If parents weekend is not a regular fixture at your institution, you have a marvelous opportunity to launch a great tradition and make progress toward attaining your institutional relations and fund-raising objectives. You don't have to work within an established agenda and set routines; you can do the project the way you think it should be done.

At Stanford University, Parents Weekend (PW) died a sudden death in the late '60s, when students weren't particularly eager to have their parents on campus, and families were a little uneasy about setting foot on the students' turf. Things have changed in the last 20 years, and the generation gap, in many ways, has narrowed. Although it was parents who, in 1984, proposed resuming the program, at least the students didn't object, and most were enthusiastic.

As the Stanford Parents Fund was raising more than half a million dollars annually from grateful nonalumni parents *without* putting on an annual showcase, Parents Weekend seemed like a great way to thank these supporters and to give the university an opportunity to show off and gain more friends.

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Planning ahead for your parents weekend

If you've decided to begin a parents weekend—whether it was your own idea or parents of your students suggested it—the first thing you need to do is set a date, preferably nine months to a year in advance. Should the program be in the fall, spring, or even the winter? At Stanford, we chose fall because the weather is best then, the football season is beginning, and parents like to see the campus early in the school year. Fall is also a better time from a fund-raising point of view; a month later when we follow up with a phone appeal to everyone who attended PW, we receive hundreds of generous year-end gifts from parents who feel great about Stanford because of the positive experience they had at PW.

But don't schedule your parents weekend too close to the start of the academic year when parents are still getting over saying goodbye to their offspring—*and* to their tuition payments. Wait at least four or five weeks after classes start and be careful of conflicts with religious holidays.

Many institutions schedule PW in the spring, which is a less hectic time of year and a beautiful one on many campuses. A few resident fellows at Stanford suggested we move PW to the Presidents' Day holiday; at this midwinter point, life seems a little dreary for many students and they would probably appreciate a visit from home. But we want to hold many of our meals outside, and we couldn't do this during the cold and rainy season.

Should you combine parents weekend with an alumni reunion or homecoming weekend? When we began our program, we decided to keep it separate. For the first two years, we called PW "For Parents Only: A Weekend on the Farm." The third year, to take advantage of fall weather, a home football game, and to avoid conflicts with the Jewish holidays, both the Parents Fund and the Alumni Association chose the same weekend. We decided to combine forces. While we were able to offer more events and there was some overlap with alumni parents who were attending their class reunions, the joint affair put a high premium on hotel rooms and parking spaces. And even though parents outnumbered alumni at several events (for a change), some nonalumni parents felt that they were at "just another alumni event." Since then we've been careful to keep PW separate from other programs.

As you're considering dates, get PW on your president's calendar. You'll want the president to address parents at some point during the weekend. At Stanford, President Donald Kennedy speaks either on Friday afternoon after parents have attended classes with their students or at "Breakfast on the Quad" on Saturday morning.

We send an "alert" postcard five to six months in advance (see Figure 7-1 at end of chapter). The postcard was essential the first year because parents weren't expecting a PW and didn't know exactly what it was. We've continued to send the postcard in subsequent years, however; parents appreciate the

advance notice, particularly those who live far from campus and need to make travel arrangements.

We send the alert card to all freshman, sophomore, and junior parents in May and to the incoming freshman class families as soon as we have their addresses, usually in July. Be sure to have your return address on the card; I also include my phone number.

Whom will you invite?

Decide early whether to invite only freshman or sophomore parents, for example, or parents of all students. At Stanford, during the years we had no PW, the dean of students office continued to host a Freshman Parents Day for parents who were bringing their children to campus at the beginning of the year, and the Alumni Association put on a Senior Class Day on the day before graduation, but there was nothing for parents in the intervening four years. This was one of the reasons we decided to revive PW. It would have been logical to invite only sophomore and junior parents (who didn't have a special "day" during the year), but we decided that if we were going to plan a huge event with no practical enrollment limitation, we would invite them all.

The first year nearly 1,000 parents, grandparents, and siblings signed up, and by the fourth year it had doubled to 2,000. While this is a lot of people to organize, it's still manageable. Each year approximately 40 percent of the parents who attend PW are parents of freshmen.

How will you pay for it?

Will your office fund PW or will you ask parents to pay for it? The first year we used savings from the annual Parents Fund budget to pay half the costs of printing, postage, rentals, student help, and miscellaneous expenses. We applied for a grant from a Stanford volunteer fund-raising group for the other half and were awarded the full $5,000. This meant we could ask parents to pay only for their meals, and I didn't have to charge a registration fee. Budget savings carried us through the second year as well. At that program, we surveyed parents to see if they would be willing to pay a modest fee, and an overwhelming majority said they would.

In 1988 for the first time, we charged a registration fee ($5 per person, up to $10 per family) to help pay for many of the things we were able to offer when we combined forces with Reunion Weekend, such as Friday and Saturday breakfasts and a festive tent to welcome parents to campus. (The first year, registration took place at one eight-foot table, which we carried from place to place during the weekend.)

Who will help plan?

In addition to bringing your president on board, meet with other members of the administration who might have good ideas for the program, such as the dean of students or dean of undergraduate studies. Our dean of undergraduate studies was extremely enthusiastic about PW and recruited an excellent panel of faculty members for a Saturday morning session on undergraduate education. Resident fellows, who live with the students, are another good source of ideas.

Although parents have not participated in the main "academic" planning process—selecting faculty speakers and so on—we did combine forces with the Mothers Club in 1988 for the final event, a parent/student fashion show and buffet luncheon on Sunday. That was received very well, and we plan on working with the club again.

Assemble the program

What should you include in the program? We have found that parents are most interested in the education their students are receiving. That's the reason they sent their children to your institution in the first place. Show off that education by scheduling star faculty speakers to address parents during the weekend. We now ask a student committee to nominate their favorite professors. Twice we let parents choose among three different speakers at two time slots on Friday afternoon. But parents complained that they wanted to hear *all* the professors. They liked it better the following two years when we scheduled three professors to talk for 30 minutes each on Saturday morning to the whole group.

Parents also enjoy attending regularly scheduled Friday classes with their children (or lectures of their own choosing), but check with the dean's or provost's office for clearance before you announce that parents are welcome. Last year we also assembled a list of about 25 Friday classes we thought parents might enjoy, announced them in the brochure, and had available a final list with locations at PW registration. (We wrote directly to those professors early in the quarter to "warn" them about the parent visitors. One communications professor was especially grateful for the notice as he had previously planned a lecture on "obscenity" for that day.)

Parents also like tours. Make arrangements for parents to tour the campus, the museum or art gallery, or a new academic building or residence. Another popular event we added was a concert by the student symphony orchestra on Friday night.

Meals in the dorms are usually a highlight of the weekend. The parent who first proposed that we have a PW told me, "I sent four kids to Stanford and never once ate dinner in a dorm." We arrange with University Food Service to have special meals for parents on Friday evening, and some of the houses go

to a lot of trouble to make parents feel welcome. (Many students, however, find it necessary to point out to their parents that white tablecloths and candlelight are not the norm.)

As Stanford does not have one or two large dining halls but many, making 900 dinner reservations is a logistical nightmare, even with the help of a computer. But parents appreciate the effort, and it's the one part of the program that we haven't changed since the first year.

Ask your residence office if it's possible to schedule receptions in the dorms so parents can meet the residence staff, their student's roommates, and the parents of those students. I leave the details of these gatherings to the resident fellows, and just announce the time—Friday at 5 p.m.—in the PW program. If your residence staffs are willing to have more than one gathering, do it. But do try to avoid having to make too many meal reservations all over campus, should you decide to have Sunday brunch in the dorms as well as a dinner.

Parents are always looking for information, so schedule sessions on academic advising, overseas studies, financial aid, career planning, and the like.

Remember that parents are coming to see their children, not just the campus or your events. Schedule family picnics or buffet lunches.

Over the years, we've included a faculty panel on campus affairs, a student panel on student government, a slide-show history of the institution, and a celebrity parent vs. student softball game. Remember to leave one evening free for parents to take their students out to dinner, and don't be too subtle about suggesting it to the families.

The brochure

Your brochure should include the program as well as additional activities taking place that weekend, both on- and off-campus (sports, cultural events, religious services); football ticket information (try to get a group discount for parents, but be sure they buy their tickets from the athletic department and not from your office); information about local hotels where you've reserved blocks of rooms for parents (at a discount if possible); and a map of the campus, including parking lots, registration location, and any other places parents will need to find.

Include a registration form printed with the parents' names and address on the back of the folded brochure, so you won't have to decipher handwritten names. Also on the label on the back of the registration form, we include the parents' university computer number. Provide space and ask parents to fill in their names, address, and their son or daughter's name, class year, and residence. Include the sentence, "Please indicate the number of persons who will be attending:" followed by a list of each PW activity with a blank in front. Below the sentence, "Enclosed is my check, payable to [your institution], for:" include a list of activities and meals for which you are charging a fee. For example:

_____	Registrations at $5 per person (maximum of $10 per family)	$_____
_____	Dinners at $7 per parent	$_____
_____	Box lunches at $7 per person	$_____
Total enclosed		

Include your return address and phone number and a registration deadline (in bold letters). You have to set a deadline, but expect that *half* of the registrations will come in after it. After three years of accepting dinner and lunch cancellations after I'd already turned in the "final" counts to the dorms and caterers, last year I specified that no refunds would be given for cancellations received after a certain date. No one complained.

Because we want Parents Weekend at Stanford to be a family event, we include in the brochure the statement, "Students are welcome to join their parents for any and all Parents Weekend activities." We also call picnics "family picnics." We encourage grandparents and siblings to attend. Unless we emphasize that all are welcome, we find that students hesitate to join activities they perceive to be "for parents only."

Make the brochure as complete as you can. Spell out in detail lecture titles, seminar topics, tour locations, and so on. It may not be easy to do this and meet production deadlines for the brochure, but it's important—especially the first year of your program—to make it clear what parents can expect during Parents Weekend. At Stanford I must turn in all brochure copy by June 30 for a program scheduled for the end of October.

You may feel that you've earned a break after you've pulled everything together for the brochure and handed it over to be typeset and printed. But this is the time to take care of dozens of details you'll be glad to have behind you once parents start receiving the brochure and your phone begins ringing. For example, you need to:

- Send an audio-visual questionnaire to the faculty lecturers. Do they need a slide projector or videotape equipment?
- Order freebies, such as buttons, or arrange discounts at the campus bookstore. Decide if you want to sell t-shirts or mugs or some other souvenir item. We've always sold t-shirts, but one year we had so many left over (there was a downpour on registration day) that we tried mugs the following year. We found that parents like both, and next year we plan to have some of each. The t-shirts will be plain red (cardinal is our school's color, but parents like red) with white letters: MY KID GOES TO STANFORD.
- Print lunch and dinner tickets.

- Order rentals—tables, chairs, tablecloths, tents.
- Double-check on classroom and auditorium bookings.
- Arrange for computer support to handle PW reservations.
- Hire a student assistant or two for the crunch, or ask parent volunteers to help process reservations.
- You already put parking locations on the map in the brochure, but you may also want to arrange a shuttle service from the parking lots to registration. We've been able to convince campus police to declare a parking-ticket moratorium on PW Friday with only a few slip-ups. Parents are not ticketed when they park in permit lots.
- Find out about handicapped access to the buildings you'll be using.
- Make back-up plans for outdoor events in case the weather is bad.
- Reconfirm with your caterers for coffee services, lunches, and dinners. (Caterers should already have been hired when you set prices for the meals.)
- Order or print extra campus maps and make signs for the campus. Balloons are a festive touch; order them now for delivery during PW.
- Get a list of local restaurants to hand out at registration.

When you see the printed brochure, you'll know that the program is actually going to take place—there's no turning back now! Don't mail the brochure bulk-rate unless you can get it out at least two and a half months before the program, and be sure to remember to send hand-addressed brochures to campus and parent VIPs, as well as to PW speakers and your bosses. Personal notes help. (Cary Grant called me the first year, after I had written him a note, to tell me he was "terribly sorry" he couldn't come to PW. It was a true highlight in my career with the Parents Fund!)

While you've done everything possible to encourage communication by mail, expect a *lot* of phone calls. Brief everyone who might answer your phone; give them registration forms, which they can fill out over the phone (this will happen more frequently after the deadline has passed).

If this is the first PW at your institution, don't expect that parents and students will instinctively understand what a parents weekend is. We took out an ad in the student newspaper the first year, after my student assistant reported that, "My friends and classmates have no idea what Parents Weekend is. Their parents get the brochure, call their kids to ask about it, and they tell their folks, 'It must not be anything great because I don't remember it from last year.'" The ad went something like this: "Parents Weekend is coming, October 25 & 26, so don't be surprised when your parents show up at your dorm!"

We try to avoid the week-before-PW panic by making registration envelopes, including nametags and meal tickets, as the reservations come in. You'll want to keep a careful tally of meal counts, but you can also expect no-shows as well as walk-ins. I've always erred in ordering too much food rather than not enough; the leftovers are appreciated by a local food bank. While this may cost a little more in the short run, it's valuable insurance against the greater costs in embarrassment if the food runs short.

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Put your student assistant to work recruiting student volunteers. You'll need many more than you might think—to be walking signposts and direction-givers, to work at registration, and to hand out lunches and clean up afterward. Give them t-shirts and a box lunch, and they'll do a great job for you.

Prepare the final PW program to hand out at registration. It will list all times and locations of events and classes, including any that have been planned since the brochure was printed in the summer.

Send the final program and a press release to the campus news office, and offer lunches to campus reporters and photographers covering PW. We received wonderful publicity, especially the first year we revived PW.

Recruit parent volunteers to introduce faculty speakers, and write the introductions for them. Parents appreciate a chance to make this nonfinancial contribution.

Parents weekend is here. . . .

If you've done your homework, your parents weekend should proceed smoothly. But be sure to expect the unexpected—it happens even in the best planned program. You can never have enough student volunteers. If those you've found are conscientious, they'll worry about the event as much as you do, and it will be all the more successful.

After it's all over, send thank-you notes to faculty, the president, and all the volunteers who helped. Before you forget, make a list of ideas for next year and make notes on the things you would have done differently. After the first year, for example, we added a Sunday brunch.

If your responsibilities include fund raising, now is a good time to make a special "ask" to parents who participated in PW. If they had a good time and were impressed with the campus and your program, they are good prospects for generous gifts to your institution.

An instant tradition

I knew we had done the right thing in reinstituting Parents Weekend when we began receiving calls from parents the Monday after the event, wanting to know dates for the next year. That day the student newsletter ran an editorial with the headline, "Parents Are Welcome," as well as a cartoon about Parents Weekend. PW had become, in the words of our president, an "instant tradition."

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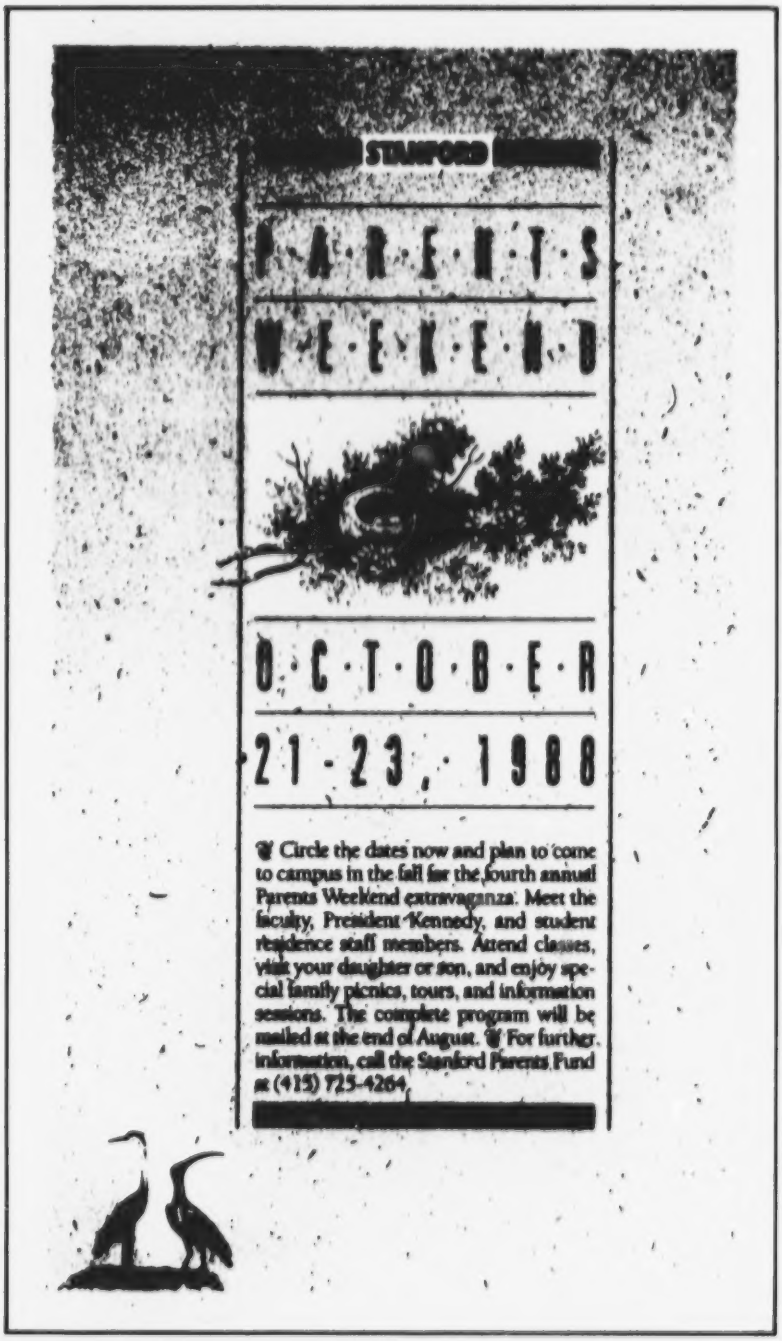
Figure 7-1: Alert Postcard


STANFORD
P·A·R·E·N·T·S
W·E·E·K·E·N·D
O·C·T·O·B·E·R
21·23,·1988
Circle the dates now and plan to come to campus in the fall for the fourth annual Parents Weekend extravaganza. Meet the faculty, President Kennedy, and student residence staff members. Attend classes, visit your daughter or son, and enjoy special family picnics, tours, and information sessions. The complete program will be mailed at the end of August. For further information, call the Stanford Parents Fund at (415) 725-4264.

Chapter 8

Parents Day Shows: Reaching for the Stars

Larry J. Weiss
Associate Vice President and Director of Alumni Affairs
Bowling Green State University

For years, parents and students had enjoyed annual Parents Day events on the campus of Bowling Green State University (BGSU). But when the football game and Saturday night dinner were over, students and their parents were on their own and often at a loss as to what to do. We had attempted to promote on-campus theater productions and student concerts, but neither our theater nor our ballroom was large enough to hold all the students and their parents. And it was difficult to select a program that would appeal to everyone.

After Parents Day in 1975, I approached my boss and suggested that next year we bring in a big-name entertainer to do a show on Saturday night. We could hold it in our basketball arena, which seats 4,500. He quickly gave me the green light on this idea, and off I went in search of the "stars."

Where do you find the stars?

My quest for the stars was made much easier when I obtained a copy of the *International Talent & Touring Directory*. Almost every entertainer you've ever heard of is listed in this book, along with his or her booking agency. Using the *Directory* as a guide, we drew up a "wish list" of the performers we might like to book for our first Parents Day Show. There were 15 to 20 people on this list.

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We contacted the various agencies for information on cost, availability, and specific needs for each of our "candidates," and after considering all the information, we made an offer to Bob Hope. In November 1976 Hope thoroughly delighted a full house of enthusiastic BGSU parents and students. The Parents Club made a profit of $16,000, and as our audience left the arena they were already wondering whom we would get for next year. (And we were too.)

In the subsequent years, we've continued to hold successful shows, and here's how we do it.

Choosing your star

We use three criteria to select our star:

- **availability:** Obviously, if the performer isn't available on the evening of our Parents Day, we'll have to look for someone else.
- **cost:** The fee you can pay will depend on the number of seats you have and the prices you charge for tickets. We've set our maximum fee at $25,000 (we sell 4,500 seats at prices ranging from $6 to $13), but we almost always pay less.
- **appeal:** We look for someone whose show will span the generation gap, appealing to both students and parents. Although comedy is more likely to do this than music, shows featuring Doc Severinsen, the Lettermen, and others have been very successful.

Additional cost considerations

As you consider making an offer to a performer (and don't hesitate to attempt to negotiate with the booking agency), remember that there will be many other costs involved. The actual contract cost of the performer is only part of the expenses associated with his or her appearance on your campus. Other negotiable costs might include:

- the performer's travel costs;
- the performer's overnight accommodations;
- a limousine or some special type of local transportation; and
- meals, refreshments, or other "specials" in the dressing room.

You will also need to provide and pay for some or all of the following:

- sound and lights (check the performer's rider for his or her needs; this will probably be the most expensive item on the list);
- back-up orchestra or other musicians and musical equipment;
- a stage if there isn't one in the building in which you plan to hold the show;
- a backdrop for the stage;

• tickets (sometimes a local merchant will pay for printing the tickets in exchange for an advertisement on the back of the tickets);
• arena set-up and tear-down; chair rental;
• ushers, ticket-takers (we use our student alumni group and student ambassadors for this—students volunteer their time and receive free tickets for the show), security personnel; and
• advertising and promotion.

This list is not necessarily all-inclusive, but these are the major costs that we anticipate.

How about an opening act?

Because our show is held on Parents Day, we always open it with students from our College of Musical Arts. This gives us the opportunity to showcase some excellent student talent. It's a big thrill for both students and parents to see these BGSU students perform, and most of the big-name performers are receptive to this type of opening act.

Let's get booking

We schedule Parents Day for late October or early November, and we usually begin our search for a star about 11 to 12 months earlier. We narrow our list to the performer we want and make an offer in January or February. By this time, we have had enough discussion and negotiation with the performer's agency that we can be fairly confident the offer will be accepted.

The booking agency then prepares and mails us a copy of the contract and rider for our signature. For your security and satisfaction (particularly if you have not booked shows before), you may want to have your institution's legal counsel review these to make sure all the provisions are acceptable.

After you make any necessary amendments to the two documents, sign all copies and return them to the booking agency. This office will then obtain the signature of the performer's representative on the contract and rider and return one copy of each to you.

Now you can begin promoting your star.

Promoting the show

We have found joint ventures to be extremely helpful and cost-effective. Each year we help promote the Parents Day football game and, in return, the athletic

department helps promote our show. Target mailings and selective advertising have worked well, and we have sold out nearly every show.

Here is the chronology of promotion we use each year:

- **March:** mailing to members of the university's Presidents Club; no free tickets but we offer them the chance to purchase seats in a select section of the arena. Early-bird mailing to everyone who ordered tickets for last year's Parents Day Show offers them the opportunity to purchase tickets before they go on sale to the general public (this is an extremely successful mailing).
- **April:** announcement sent to all faculty and staff on campus; news releases to area media and the campus newspaper.
- **Late June:** a brochure announcing all Parents Day activities (college receptions, football game, and the show) sent to parents of all continuing students and incoming freshmen; this brochure includes ticket order forms for the football game and the show.
- **July:** preregistration program for incoming freshmen and their parents; we set up a booth near the bookstore and sell tickets for the show.
- **August:** the summer issue of our quarterly alumni magazine, *At BG,* includes a story about the show and a ticket order form.
- **September:** in exchange for our June brochure including football ticket information, the athletic department sends Parents Day information to all parents, promoting both the game and our show. Advertisements for the show appear in the program for each home football game up until the time of the show.
- **October:** additional advertising if needed.

Financing the show

At Bowling Green, ticket revenues pay for nearly everything related to the show except the parents brochure and some of the targeted mailings. Ticket revenues are predicated on the number of seats in the arena times the price charged for tickets. Give a lot of thought to how much you will charge for tickets. You want to price them low enough to sell and yet high enough to cover your expenses and yield some profit for your institution.

Another way to help finance the show is through local advertising and sponsorships. A Bowling Green merchant pays for the printing of our tickets in exchange for the privilege of advertising on the back. Other local merchants may be willing to supply food and motel accommodations in return for an acknowledgement in the printed program. Perhaps an office on your campus that plans other performances may be willing to cosponsor your show. This gives the office good PR, and you get some financial help.

A real team effort

Since our first Parents Day Show in 1976, I have been impressed with the way our entire campus works together to make this event a reality. And this interaction and cooperation are not only good for the show, they are good for the university as well. When the show is over, everyone comes away feeling they made a key contribution to its success—and they did!

A final thought

The response from parents to our Parents Day Show has been nothing short of fantastic! They find it is a most enjoyable way to spend an evening with their BGSU student, and the students find it provides a fun-filled event to attend with their moms and dads. In fact, the entire university community rallies around the show, and we sell many tickets to faculty and staff plus area residents. From a PR standpoint, the annual Parents Day Show provides many pluses for the university.

Also important to us is the financial aspect of the show. With approximately 4,400 seats as capacity, we realize an annual profit of about $10,000. These funds are used to support various university projects and programs. If ever a project provided the university with a "win-win" situation, our Parents Day Show seems to be the event.

Bowling Green, Ohio, is obviously not New York, Los Angeles, or Las Vegas, and we are not able to provide some of the "big-city" conveniences that entertainers may be accustomed to. However, we go to extremes to make our parents and the entertainers feel welcome and comfortable while they are here—and that hospitality has been well received. Comedian Red Skelton, who appeared in one of our shows, arrived in Bowling Green on Wednesday evening for a Saturday night performance. He spent the next three days visiting classes on campus and people downtown. He later commented, "I really enjoy the atmosphere here and I am not talking about the weather."

We strongly feel that if we do our part to make everyone "enjoy the atmosphere here," our annual Parents Day Show will continue to be a tremendous success for all concerned.

For more information

If you've never done a program like this, it may seem somewhat overwhelming. Don't hesitate to contact our alumni office here at Bowling Green State University if you need additional information. We will be most happy to assist in any way possible.

Chapter 9

Orientation Programs For Parents

Grace M. Severino
Director, Parents Office
Syracuse University

Syracuse University has been a pioneer in its commitment to parents' interests and parents programming for many years. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many campuses were in turmoil as students demonstrated against the war in Vietnam. Media reports were exaggerated and unreliable. In their concern, parents often turned to administrators to learn what was going on. In response to this need, in 1972 Syracuse University established an office just for parents, one of the first of its kind in the country.

Today, as in its early days, our parents office acts as a liaison between parents and the university.

While all institutions must deal with parents whether they have a parents office or not, establishing a formal office structures and organizes the parent-institution relationship. Otherwise, parents are often confused and frustrated by the many different administrative offices and departments dealing with different aspects of the institution.

A parents office can be a very busy place—a place where the numerous questions from parents are received, researched, and responded to, making a relatively large institution more personal, more approachable. How the parents perceive what is happening in the residence halls, in the dining halls, on the quad, and in the classrooms is often inaccurate. Rumors abound, and the parents office must deal with them.

Colleges and universities must recognize the need to reach out to parents; to make them feel a part of their student's educational experience. This can

be accomplished by providing parents with an orientation program—separate from that of the students—that gives them an opportunity to experience today's academic setting and to learn more about the institution's resources.

Summer Orientation Program for Parents

The Syracuse University Summer Orientation Program for Parents includes the following elements:

- **Information sessions:** Presentations by representatives of student services explain many of the campus support services to parents. Topics include: student orientation, health, academic support, residence and dining, security, student groups and organizations, and the parents office. We consider the information sessions to be the most important part of the program, and we make sure to allow enough time to answer any questions parents may have. No parent should leave this section of the program with an unanswered question.
- **Academic samplers:** Professors conduct typical classes in a variety of subjects—art history, philosophy, biology. These lectures enable parents to experience the classroom and instructional programs firsthand. Parents are encouraged to ask questions and to participate in class discussions.
- **Social gatherings:** Parents get to know other parents at a barbeque, a concert, or perhaps an unscheduled gathering at the student center or on the quad.

Familiarizing parents with their student's new environment should be the mission of every college and university parents program. I was delighted to receive the following letter from a parent who had attended our two-day orientation program:

> Come September, I'm going to be much more willing to "let go" of our son when he starts attending your university now that I have participated in the Parents Orientation Program. The questions asked by other parents indicated that they cared about their sons' and daughters' well-being just as much as I do mine. After listening to you and the other representatives, I felt you cared too. Thank you for making these sessions available to us.
>
> Now that we have Mark all situated, our daughter, Mary, is thinking of applying to Syracuse University. . . . I can now encourage her all the more after experiencing my own two days of your institution's campus life.

Well-informed parents help to make the student's experience a better one. Therefore, efforts to involve and inform parents should continue throughout the student's undergraduate years.

Opening day

During the opening of the institution in the fall, as new students arrive on campus, a well-staffed parents hospitality tent can provide a warm welcome on this often difficult day. Parents may feel "fragile," and keeping them actively involved can ease their anxiety. At this time, we distribute campus maps; dates and details about Parents Weekend, which occurs later in the fall; and information about student banking, how to order a birthday cake, and other necessities of student life. Volunteer parents from the local parents association greet the freshmen and their parents in the residence halls and try to answer the many questions that arise as students and their parents enter this new and unfamiliar environment.

Later in the day, at a formal Parents Convocation, the dean of students and one of the university's outstanding professors address the issue of "college shock." The program concludes as I attempt to bring parents a message of reassurance: Although this is the day to "break away" from their student, the Syracuse University parents office is there to provide a support system to help them do it.

Parents Weekend

Parents Weekend, in mid- to late October, is one of the biggest events planned by the parents office. While parents enjoy a taste of the academic and social life of our campus, the emphasis is always on enabling parents and their son or daughter to spend time together on this special weekend. Activities include college and department receptions, residence hall events, academic samplers and workshops, a musical production featuring students, and, of course, dining and entertainment. We encourage siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends to join in the festivities.

Parents newsletter

As part of our commitment to ongoing parent orientation, we publish the *Parents Campus Connection* twice a year. This newspaper is full of news items and features about faculty, special programs, campus activities (both academic and social), and the campus community.

Parents Handbook

Every year we publish a *Parents Handbook* for parents of new students. It is designed to guide them through the university's academic and administrative

network so that they can help the student take advantage of the many academic and social resources available at Syracuse.

Parents seminars

We've recently added to our parents program seminars for parents of seniors. These parents want to help their student during this potentially chaotic time of life, but often don't know how—or how much—to help. We offer these seminars in several different locations throughout the country. At the seminars, the parents benefit from the support and advice of other parents of seniors. The "hot" topics include:

- understanding the student's high expectations and job anxieties;
- dealing with the student who comes back home to live after graduation; and
- helping the student maintain a confident and optimistic attitude during his or her search for a job.

Conclusion

At Syracuse, we feel it is our responsibility to develop formal parents programming that encourages parents to come to campus. If we can provide an atmosphere of welcome for parents who come to our programs, we will help create a lifelong loyalty to the university. Thus, successful parents programs have a ripple effect throughout the university.

During one of our recent events, a parent told me about a visit she made to an older child's college. "They made us feel as though we were an interruption to their work," she said, "and you make us feel as though you are happy we are here."

And, indeed, we are!

Chapter 10

A Family Affair: Involving Grandparents

Catherine Esty Wejchert
Formerly Assistant Director for Parents Programs
Smith College (1987-89) and Amherst College (1984-87)

Many institutions have begun to consider involving grandparents as they look for new resources for funds, for support for student programs, and for ways to augment the work of the admissions and public relations offices. They are finding that many grandparents are interested in their grandchild's institution and are willing and happy to commit time and money to it.

Although the most quantifiable benefit of grandparents' support is an increase in contributions, there are other, less tangible benefits. Involving grandparents extends the institution's "family" and increases its outside contacts. This, in turn, improves its marketing efforts and its public image. Students often have a less complicated relationship with their grandparents than with their parents, and they are pleased to have their grandparents involved. Providing happy institutional experiences for students, such as involving their favorite grandparent, makes them more likely to become happy alumni, active on the institution's behalf and eager to support it.

The financial benefits of involving grandparents can be considerable. At a time when more and more undergraduates are seeking financial aid, institutions cannot expect to find increasing numbers of wealthy families to support the parents fund. Grandparents can provide one of the new areas for funding where support can continue to increase from year to year.

Some grandparents help with the costs of the student's college education. At Amherst College, where a grandparents program was started in 1985, the

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director of financial aid estimates that approximately 5 percent of those seeking financial aid receive assistance from grandparents. The percentage of students who receive financial assistance from grandparents is probably much higher among the students at Amherst who do not apply for financial aid.

As tuitions continue to rise, grandparents may be contributing a higher percentage of college costs. Therefore, grandparents, as a growing constituency, need to be kept informed and involved. The fact that grandparents are paying part of the price of college indicates that they have financial means. If they are made aware of additional needs of the college, they may be willing to make additional voluntary contributions.

Finally, a grandparents program may benefit the parents program because many parents are happy that *their* parents are knowledgeable about the institution.

Before you begin

As with any new program, before you begin a grandparents program, it is important to obtain support from your administration. Institutions of higher learning generally treat students as they should be treated—as adults—and involving grandparents may seem to put an inappropriate emphasis on family ties and on the youth of the students. But if a program is developed with sensitivity, it will not encroach on the students' experience of the institution or—also important—on that of their parents. Your program has a much greater chance of success if you can persuade the president, deans, provost, and whoever else should support your efforts, that approaching grandparents for funds, involving them in programs, and keeping them informed will provide real benefits to the institution at a very low cost.

Building a database

Begin your grandparents program by gathering biographical data. To do this, you might include a section for grandparent information on the matriculation form that freshmen fill out over the summer or upon arrival in the fall. The dean's office or registrar can then share the information with your office. This will provide a high rate of return, but a low rate of accuracy because students often give incomplete information.

Rollins College, which has sponsored a Grandparents Weekend since the early 1980s, includes a questionnaire in a mailing sent to freshmen over the summer. One of the questions asked is whether they would like their grandparents to be on the mailing list. If so, they are asked to list their names and addresses.

In the information you send to parents of incoming freshmen—or to all parents—you could ask if they would like *their* parents to receive mail from the institution. At Dartmouth, freshman parents receive a card in June that includes such a question. As many as 86 percent of the parents have said "yes," and this has added about 350 names a year.

A third method leaves it up to the student. Schedule a special event on campus for grandparents and ask students to give your office the names and addresses of their grandparents *if* they would like them to be invited. The grandparents whose names you receive through this method probably already have a good relationship with the students on which you can build.

Recruiting volunteers

Now that you have accumulated a database for grandparents, you can identify those who would be willing to serve as volunteers for your institution. As with any volunteers, before you can recruit grandparents, you should develop job descriptions so that your prospective volunteers will know exactly what you are asking them to do and how much time it will take.

Depending on the programs already in place at your institution, these job descriptions might include fund raising, promoting social and educational activities on campus and in various regions, admissions recruiting, and providing internships and career information. For grandparents, it is probably best to start with fundamental fund raising and a few special activities on campus.

You may want to create a separate volunteer committee of grandparents or add your grandparent volunteers to existing parent fund-raising or program committees. If you are just beginning your grandparents program, it is probably easier to include grandparents in existing volunteer networks.

How do you identify those willing and able grandparent volunteers? Review your donor records for grandparents who have contributed regularly or who have made a substantial one-time financial commitment. Ask your current parent volunteers—maybe their parents have developed an interest in the institution's programs. What about that devoted grandfather who never misses a tennis match? Or the grandmother who comes to all the theater productions? Other grandparents may show their interest in specific campus organizations through museum or library membership.

In many ways, grandparents are perfect volunteers: They have valuable experience; often retired, they have more time and energy to devote to volunteer service than many parents; and as they are usually not the ones who have to come up with substantial tuition payments, they often have greater financial resources.

First steps to a grandparents program

The most convenient and cost-effective way to begin your grandparents program is to incorporate it into existing parent programs. To avoid alienating grandparents (and perhaps students and parents), do not make an appeal for donations your first step. Start by reinforcing grandparents' connection with the institution. Increase awareness of the institution's programs and cultivate interest by putting grandparents on the mailing lists for your magazines and newsletters.

At Dartmouth College, during the first semester of freshman year, a student's grandparents receive a college schedule, a wall calendar, and a parents and grandparents newsletter. They do not receive any appeals until the second semester.

Have your grandparent volunteers invite other grandparents to attend regional club activities, to join regional associations, or to be on the club's mailing list. As always, the personal touch is most effective and can serve a twofold purpose by involving your volunteers from the start.

Grandparents weekend

Special events for grandparents show your commitment to developing a relationship with the student's extended family. When students give you the names and addresses of grandparents to be invited, the special event also provides a method to gather information.

Involve your grandparent volunteers in the planning for the special event, but to ensure that the event remains appropriate to the institution and engages the whole campus community, include on the planning committee a dean, many students, and a faculty member (who may also be a grandparent).

In planning a special event for grandparents, you can minimize cost and effort by overlapping with activities that are already taking place. You can interweave seminars, luncheons, teas, and dinner with the president. Be sure to include registration where grandparents complete address cards to help update your grandparent database.

As you schedule activities for the grandparent event, do not underestimate either the vigor or the interest of your participants. Amherst College held its first Grandparents' Weekend in the spring of 1985; it included concerts, plays, and athletic events—all previously scheduled—as well as a reception center, an opportunity to visit classes on Friday, special faculty lectures, a luncheon, a tour of the museum's collection, and a tea at the president's house after a baseball game. Sounds like a busy weekend, but when the 60 grandparents who attended were asked to evaluate the weekend, several commented that, although they had enjoyed it, they had not had enough to do.

The next year Amherst added tours of the campus, sessions in which students discussed their senior theses (a great way to showcase the educational process), and more faculty lectures.

Amherst did not want to bypass parents, so the Parent Council, under the aegis of the development office, notified parents ahead of time about plans for this first special weekend. One parent responded, "I'm really glad that Bill invited my parents. They're helping to pay for his education and now they'll get to know what they're paying for."

Perhaps the most revealing comment during the Amherst weekend came from a grandfather who said, "I'm delighted to visit and learn what an exciting place this is. I think Amherst is lucky to have my granddaughter." (For more comments from Amherst grandparents, see the article at the end of this chapter, "Amherst Is Lucky to Have My Granddaughter.")

A special event that fosters good will can quickly become a campus tradition. After holding Grandparents' Weekend two years in a row, Amherst decided the event would have more effect if it were held every other year. During the year that the weekend was skipped, there were many calls from disappointed grandparents, parents, and students. They were appeased when they understood that Grandparents' Weekend and Siblings' Weekend would alternate years.

Rollins College in Florida had been inviting grandparents to campus in February when many of them were wintering nearby. When the college decided to hold Parents Weekend one year and Grandparents Weekend the next, grandparents were also invited to Parents Weekend. The result: While approximately 30 grandparents came to Grandparents Weekend, about 50 came to Parents Weekend. Families seem to like to attend together. Many grandparents need help getting around and prefer to visit with their children. In addition, Rollins' Parents Weekend offers a more extensive program and is more enticing.

To prolong the good will of a special event and to reap a maximum benefit, plan some kind of follow-up. At Amherst College, grandparents who attended the weekend received an evaluation questionnaire. Special buttons printed for the occasion were mailed to grandparents who were invited but unable to attend.

A short time after the weekend, the Parent Council sent a letter and reply form to grandparents asking them if they wanted to remain on the mailing list. The letter forthrightly explained that mail would include appeal letters as well as the college quarterly magazine, newsletters, and notices of events in their areas. This meant that there would be no surprises for grandparents. Parents who might learn that their parents had been solicited could not be irritated when they learned that it was by choice.

Fund raising from grandparents: A special appeal

You can build into your existing fund-raising calendar a sequence of appeals to grandparents, using either your small list of those who have elected to be

solicited or your larger group of names retrieved from students' or parents' forms. Your grandparent volunteers can advise you on the timing and the approach that will work best.

Unless your research indicates that you have a major gift prospect, you will probably be asking grandparents to contribute to the annual fund. Before sending out the solicitations, decide where their contributions will be directed. Will they be added to the parents fund or go into a special grandparents fund? Grandparents may be a good group to ask to support a special fund or program that will directly affect student life—a campus center, athletic facility, library, scholarship aid, or faculty fund, for example. In your appeal letter, include information about this special project or whatever else their gifts will support.

Involve your grandparent volunteers in every aspect of the fund-raising process. Do not try to persuade a volunteer to do anything he or she does not feel comfortable doing, but do not hesitate to ask grandparents if they would be willing to make phone calls or visit other grandparents. For example, at Amherst a parent volunteered her mother to make telephone calls for the annual fund. The grandmother was living in a nursing home, but she loved talking to people and had been involved in many fund-raising efforts in her younger days. Now that she was no longer physically active, she was eager to make calls to keep occupied.

Be sensitive to the needs and talents of your volunteers, and both you and they will reap the benefits.

Dartmouth College solicits grandparents five times a year; Rollins College does it three to five times; and Amherst twice. The results show that the additional effort pays off. At Dartmouth, 120 grandparents contributed $20,440 in fiscal year 1986-87. Rollins had always included grandparents in its friends constituency and did not begin to count grandparents' gifts separately until fiscal year 1987-88. Halfway through the year, Rollins had already recorded 15 grandparents' gifts totaling $9,200. At Amherst, the average year produces approximately $5,000 from 20 grandparents, but one year brought in a $50,000 gift-in-kind.

Grandparents, because of their situation in life, may be particularly interested in planned giving. Before you send out your first appeal, consult your institution's planned giving officer for advice about information or questions to include on a reply form for types of gifts that may be especially attractive to this older group. Grandparents might also consider making named gifts in memory of a loved one or in honor of their grandchild.

Evaluation: Tangible and intangible results

After your grandparents program has been operating for a year, it's time to review and evaluate it. You should judge it on two levels:

• **The tangible results:** Did you raise enough money to justify the time and money you and your staff spent on the program? Did you establish a base of giving so that contributions will increase in the future? Have grandparents provided new internships, helped locate talented new students, or advised current students on career paths? Has the program identified potential guest lecturers or special talents that the institution could use?

• **The intangibles:** Did the program generate good will toward the institution? Are students and parents feeling a stronger connection with the institution because grandparents have been included?

Your answers to these questions should determine how you will continue your grandparents program for the future—or whether you should continue it at all. If your assessment shows that it is not worth your time and money, it is important to discontinue your efforts before you have committed any more energy to them. But be sure you have carefully weighed those hard-to-measure intangibles, such as the good will created when three generations of a family come together for a special event on your campus. If you are willing to be creative and to take risks, support for your institution may truly become a family affair.

"Amherst Is Lucky to Have My Granddaughter"

Brian Albert

"It's the greatest idea that anyone ever thought of," said Mrs. Frances Edelstein, grandmother of Katherine Freedman '88, when asked her opinion of Grandparents' Weekend at Amherst. Catherine Wejchert, director of parent programs, also liked the idea when Mr. Lawrence Brooks, grandfather of Kelley House '88, presented it to her. A planning committee of interested students, faculty, and grandparents was quickly formed, and preparations for the April 26-27 weekend began.

Mr. Brooks felt that grandparents have an interest in their grandchildren's activities. Knowing of a similar program at Tabor Academy, a prep school in Marion, Massachusetts, he thought that Amherst should have one also. He hopes that someday the Parent Council will also have grandparent representation.

The Grandparents' Weekend Committee assembled a schedule of events beginning with visits to classes. Following these visits, grandparents attended a faculty/student panel entitled, "A Reply to the Secretary of Education: Amherst Students Are Not Being Shortchanged," and a debate, sponsored by the Amherst Debate Society, resolving that "You Can't Fall Off the Floor."

On Saturday, English Professor G. Armour Craig amused his audience with anecdotes from his Amherst experiences in a lecture entitled "Fifty Years of

Amherst" and Geology Professor Edward Belt presented "Some Thoughts on the Topography as Viewed from Memorial Hill" at the War Memorial.

In the afternoon, President and Mrs. Peter Pouncey hosted a tea party in their home with the Zumbyes providing entertainment. Grandparents were also invited to the baseball game against Wesleyan and the men's lacrosse game against Bowdoin. In addition, both the Pratt Geology Museum and the Mead Art Gallery were open and tours of the Emily Dickinson House were offered. A special luncheon was held in Merrill Dining Commons.

Since Grandparents' Weekend coincided with the Spring Arts Festival, the visitors were able to enjoy an abundance of events; traditional music and dance of Korea, a Sabrina concert, and the swing music of such composers as Glen Miller and Duke Ellington at "A Night at the Cotton Club" were just a few.

Mrs. Della Currie, grandmother of Robbie Robertson '86, said, "I thought I was going to be bored, but I wasn't." The program was described as "not overly demanding" by Mr. Hal Johnson, grandfather of Matt Schwab '88; Mr. David Edelstein, grandfather of Katherine Freedman '88, considered it a "well thought out, balanced program" while others expressed their desire for a few more scheduled events.

When asked their impressions of Amherst, one grandparent commented on his observations of a "good interaction between students and faculty," and the close-knit community feeling at the college. Others mentioned that they found the students to be "open, friendly, and polite."

Grandparents, as well as other relatives including some aunts, uncles, and parents, whose addresses were supplied by consenting students, were sent invitations over a month prior to the scheduled weekend. Many shared their excitement at being invited. They knew they were welcome because their grandchildren chose to have them invited; some came from as far away as Houston, Texas and Denver, Colorado to spend the weekend at Amherst.

Between 100 and 150 invitations were sent out, 87 accepted, and some attended without registering. The committee, which had set its goal at 50 participating grandparents, considered this a tremendous success for the first year of what will probably become an annual event.

The idea was rather original, and the Grandparents' Weekend Committee knows of only one other college which conducts such a weekend. Amherst has already been approached for information by other colleges which will use the Amherst weekend as a model.

The grandparents were very positive about the weekend. Mr. Hal Johnson said, "I urge grandparents to visit the campus at this particular time in a student's career."

The weekend gave grandparents the opportunity to show their family pride. Mrs. R.L. Allen Jr., mother of Royal Allen '85, thought that the weekend was a fantastic idea because more people could enjoy her son's senior recital, which was part of the program of events for the weekend. Mr. Frank Rudis, grandfather of Kristen Halkola '88, summed up the pride of all grandparents about their

grandchildren when he said, "I think Amherst is lucky to have my granddaughter."

Another visitor, Mr. Ben Golub, grandfather of Lenny Golub '88, praised the idea, saying "It gives grandparents the opportunity to see what their child is doing." He added, "With programs like this, we're closing the generation gap."

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Section 3

Keeping in Touch With Parents

Chapter 11

Cultivation: The Key to Creating Loyal Alumni Parents

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If you want parents to support your institution after their students graduate, you must plan and implement a cultivation effort that begins at the very beginning, providing positive experiences for parents from the earliest possible date. To do this most effectively, you must learn to think like a parent. Successful alumni parent programming must be built upon the rewarding experience that parents had with the institution while their child was enrolled. And these good feelings must be reinforced to maintain the loyalty and affection developed during those years. This means that, although they are now alumni parents, they are still willing to assist the institution, and they are still interested in its welfare.

All this theory sounds good, but don't be lulled to sleep by the melody and forget the meaning of the lyrics. Cultivation is a serious business that takes great concentration and attention to detail. Successful cultivation is not a one-time effort but a series of contacts with parents, aimed at building rapport. These contacts are designed to meet the basic needs of every parent to be adequately informed about the institution and to feel that the institution is genuinely interested in his or her child as an individual.

All of your cultivation efforts should be motivated by a genuine desire to establish a personal relationship with parents. Learn to think like a parent and make parents feel that you care about them—not just as payers of tuition but as human beings and important members of your institutional family.

Begin cultivation during recruitment

Parent program administrators know that cultivation has no end, yet where should it begin? As the first impression is often the most important, you should begin to cultivate parents during the recruiting period. While you can't contact the parents of every prospective student, those contacts you do make can be very effective.

The admissions office can provide a select list of top students who have applied to your institution. A letter from the president may be most appropriate if the institution is trying to recruit a merit scholar or someone with special talent. Effective contacts might also come from a member of the parents association, an influential alumnus in the community, or a representative of an activity on campus related to the student's interest (the drama department, for example, or the student newspaper).

Current data indicate that parents have the most influence over where their child goes to college. Cultivating parents during recruitment shows that you recognize them as major players in the educational process.

After enrollment

Once a student enrolls, you should attempt to establish an early bond with his or her parents. One way to do this is to send to the local media a news release to announce the acceptance of the student at your institution. Sometimes it pays to ask an alumnus or parents association representative living in the student's community to assist in placing the news in a widely read edition of the paper. Announcements on radio are always very well-received. Usually it is a simple matter to have this done for a student with a reputation in academics, athletics, or some other area. Of course, you can't do this for every student.

News releases built around a scholarship grant are likely to be acceptable in these times when financial aid is a major incentive in the competition for good students. You don't need to reveal the amount of the award—the fact that the student has earned a scholarship is enough. You may even be able to get coverage from local television stations. Consult your public relations office or news bureau as to how to approach each segment of the media.

During the student years

It is important to maintain contact with parents throughout their student's career at your institution. If they hear from you only when tuition is due or when you need money, you cannot expect them to be motivated to support the institution after the student graduates.

Parents who feel that they are considered only as a financial resource and are not involved in the life of the institution are unlikely to urge the student to persevere if he or she has problems during the college years. Many analysts believe that this detachment on the part of parents is a significant contributing factor in the poor retention rates at some institutions. An active parents program can make detached parents into your institution's most loyal supporters.

How to do it: Think like a parent

Parent cultivation is actually fairly simple if you remember to think like a parent. It takes very little to warm the heart of a parent when his or her child is away at school. Look for the countless opportunities on campus and enlist others to help gather information about students that you can use to cultivate parents. For example, you might send a monthly memo asking faculty and staff for notes of interest about students. Include a form they can fill out and return. These many bits of information can become a potent force in the cultivation effort.

What parent wouldn't be thrilled to receive a letter from a faculty member expressing appreciation for the hard work his or her child was doing quietly, out of the limelight, on the yearbook staff, for example, or helping a friend overcome academic difficulties? Small incidents that too often go unappreciated can become nuggets of gold when they are communicated to parents. In fact, congratulating a parent on a student's otherwise unnoticed achievement may be more effective than praising a major triumph that is acclaimed by all. (See the end of this chapter for some sample letters.)

Sometimes a student may need special treatment for a variety of reasons. He or she may have a handicap or a medical problem that requires assistance or monitoring. The president or a campus health-care professional could write to assure the parents that he or she is aware of the situation.

When a student at your institution receives an award or is involved in a special event, ask your president to write a letter to congratulate the student's parents. Letters from faculty or staff may also be appropriate. A letter from the president to the editors of local papers—with a copy to the student's parents—is also very effective. Enclose a photo or clipping for added impact.

You can use information contained in school records for other important contacts with parents. For example, consider sending parents a card or letter to commemorate the student's birthday.

While the "good times" provide an excellent opportunity for parent cultivation, the "bad times" may provide an even better one.

Ask the dean of students to send a notice to your office if a student is ill or has been in an accident. At such a time, parents may have a greater need to hear from the institution than when things are going well. A letter from the president or a phone call to parents—perhaps from others on campus—shows understanding and concern. A telephone conversation has the added advantage of giving the caller and the parent an opportunity to discuss the matter warmly and to exchange pertinent information that may assist both parties in dealing with the situation. Helping a parent over these rough places in the student's life creates a special bond between parent and institution.

Don't forget your "average" students

It's not hard to find opportunities to cultivate the parents of a brilliant physics major, an accomplished violinist, or a track star, but what about the preponderance of your students—the average, salt-of-the-earth students, who are seldom "the best" at anything? Sometimes there's more to these students than meets the eye, but you may have to do a little digging to find an opportunity.

Routinely collect campus bulletins; department newsletters; student publications; and programs from plays, recitals, and athletic events. Look through these for names of people who have participated in the many events and activities that make up the life of your institution—intramurals, service groups, clubs, and Greek organizations, for example. Highlight each student's name and send a copy to his or her parents with a brief note.

Sometimes sending a candid photograph of the student in a typical school situation may trigger an excellent response. You can use photos from the yearbook or the student newspaper, or you can buy them, usually for a nominal fee, from photography students. As always, "little things mean a lot." Average students are—by definition—in the majority, and their parents are just as interested in them as are the parents of the award winners.

Use common sense as you plan your contacts. Don't try to contact the parents of *all* of your students. You'd have to develop an assembly-line approach, and this would trivialize the contacts. Communications with parents should be significant. If there's nothing to communicate, don't waste the parent's time—and your own—attempting to manufacture something.

Involving parents in the life of the institution

Letters to parents, no matter how well done, cannot replace their participation in the institution's special events, whether on campus or in the local commu-

nity. Both provide excellent opportunities to cultivate parents by getting them involved in institutional activities.

Most campuses are beehives of activity throughout the academic year. If you are involved in the early planning stages of the events for each department on campus, you can ask those responsible for each program to invite parents to participate. When someone other than the parents program administrator does the inviting, it lends an air of freshness and excitement to the activity. (If you *always* do the asking, your invitations quickly cease to be "special.")

Encourage your campus colleagues to ask parents to participate in the following ways, among others:

- as guest lecturers or forum members in the classroom;
- as artists whose works are exhibited in the art gallery;
- as musicians and other performers in campus entertainments; and
- as career counselors and providers of internships through the campus placement office.

When Carson-Newman's Parents Association sent out the volunteer survey in Figure 11-1 at end of chapter, the response was enthusiastic and provided an excellent base of talented parent volunteers; 50 percent of the respondents wanted to help recruit students, 26 percent were involved in career counseling, and 11 percent expressed a desire to host meetings and raise funds. One parent with audio-visual expertise has provide a multi-phase slide presentation for our student ambassadors to be used in a bid for the District III SAA/SF Convention. Other outstanding contacts are being developed.

Off-campus school-sponsored activities such as social gatherings for the president, faculty lectures, concerts, and cultural and athletic events also provide an opportunity for parental involvement.

You should lobby the president and department heads to include qualified parents on governing boards and committees. In this way, you bring parents on campus and enable them to contribute to the educational process. This type of involvement may, in fact, be the best kind of cultivation you can offer parents.

As you set up and administer your program, *be sure to avoid parent burnout.* Keep careful records of who is invited to what by whom. Don't impose on parents by asking them to attend too many events or to do too many things for the institution.

Occasionally a parent may become angry about something the institution has—or hasn't—done. You probably wouldn't want to approach that parent with an invitation or request until the problem is resolved. Or, possibly, you may be able to help deal with the problem. In any case, it pays to be informed, and it's up to you to see that you *are* informed. You should institute and maintain a system of internal communication that lets you know as soon as any "parent problem" develops.

Cultivating parents of alumni

Parent association-sponsored programs offer parents of alumni many opportunities to remain involved with your institution. However, whether or not these parents wish to maintain their relationship with the institution depends in large part on the success of your cultivation efforts while their child was a student.

I believe those parents of alumni who have proven ability should be encouraged to provide leadership in the parent program after their children graduate. These people can be among your best leaders as they've "been through it all" and can provide the perspective of experience. You can also count on them for a greater degree of objectivity than the parent of a current student who must necessarily give priority to the welfare of his or her child over that of the institution.

Parents of alumni, therefore, can be a priceless resource, but they must be carefully tended now that they no longer have a bond with your institution through their student. Unless they receive frequent reinforcement, they are likely to die on the vine. Your contacts should reinforce the good experiences of the past. You can do this by thanking the parents for jobs well done, congratulating them on their children's successes—the alumni office can assist you here—and establishing an award program for outstanding parent volunteers.

Awards should be designed to highlight major elements of your program, show public appreciation to outstanding parent volunteers, and establish records that are a very useful reinforcement tool. All programs should have one award limited to alumni parent volunteers.

Remember: Thank them, compliment them, award them.

Conclusion

The recipe for keeping parents active after their students graduate is a simple one:

- *Start early.* Cultivation during the student recruiting process is imperative.
- *Have a plan.* This plan should be both comprehensive and detailed to ensure that parents are made to feel a part of the educational process of the institution.
- *Involve parents in meaningful activities.* Use the talents of parents in institution-sponsored activities.
- *Establish a program to keep selected alumni parents actively working for the institution.* **Thank them. Congratulate them. Reward them.**

Following this recipe should ensure that your parents program provides a growing base of support for your institution—parents who remain active and loyal for many years after their children graduate.

Figure 11-1: Parents Association Volunteer Survey

CARSON-NEWMAN PARENTS ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEER SURVEY

The recent parents survey revealed that parents are willing to help Carson Newman in accomplishing a number of services for our students. Your assistance in the following areas will be extremely helpful to our being able to offer the best educational opportunities possible. Please complete this card and return it to the college.

Name _____ Phone (____) _____ home (____) _____ office

Address _____ Zip _____

Student's Name _____ Year _____ Major _____

Your Occupation _____ Employer _____

Your areas of interest: ____Internships ____Career counseling ____Recruiting students ____Fund Raising

____Hosting members of student group in home ____Organizing local event

Other ways I can help/Suggestions/Comments: _____

_____

_____

____ I am willing to pay a nominal fee to receive the **Orange & Blue** (student newspaper).

Appendix

The following letters show some of the ways that we reach out to Carson-Newman parents to reassure, congratulate, or condole with them over the ups and downs of student life. The last letter, to the Wilsons, thanks them for their past service as co-chairs of a Parents Association committee.

CARSON-NEWMAN COLLEGE

March 18, 1988

Mr. and Mrs. William Helton
42 Creek Road
Shelby, Ohio 69180

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Helton:

The Communication Arts Department has been responsible for producing the annual for Carson-Newman for many years. Work on this publication is done by a staff of student volunteers. The task is a labor of love and done at the personal expense of losing countless hours of free time. However, the staff molds as a team and achieves its goal. Each member exhibits responsibility to a particular job, working out of the limelight at all hours doing her part.

I have seen scores of annual staffers in my twenty years at Carson-Newman and your daughter Karen has done an excellent job. She is enthusiastic, works hard and is a stabilizing influence for others who need moral support.

Mr. and Mrs. Helton, since the publication gets the glory for the staff, I want to personally compliment you regarding Karen. She is delightful! Frankly, I dread her graduating. She will leave a void that will be hard to fill.

Sincerely,

H. D. Champion, Jr.

H. Daniel Champion, Jr., Chairman
Communication Arts Department

HDC/es

JEFFERSON CITY TENNESSEE 37760 615 475 9061

CARSON-NEWMAN COLLEGE

September 17, 1981

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Dantoni
112 Crystal Circle
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23452

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Dantoni:

Enclosed is a copy of the memorandum sent to Mr. Barry Halliday, director of ARA Food Services, following our conversation Monday. Mr. Halliday has assured me that he will meet Barbara's specific dietary needs. I have arranged for them to meet Thursday afternoon, September 20, to arrange a schedule for her meals.

Having four children, I understand your concern and want to thank you for discussing the problem with me. It is a pleasure to provide you with this special service. Please keep me informed regarding Barbara's progress as you see it. You can be sure we will keep an eye on the situation and do everything we can to insure that she has a normal, happy experience at Carson-Newman. With this in mind, we are dealing with this matter routinely. We do not want Barbara to feel she is a burden on anyone. We want her to feel "at home".

Most sincerely,

Cordell Maddox
President

CM:ss
Enclosure

JEFFERSON CITY TENNESSEE 37760 615 475 9061

September 17, 1981

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mr. Barry Halliday, Director
ARA Food Services

SUBJECT: Diet of Barbara L. Dantoni

One of our students, Barbara L. Dantoni, is under the supervision of her doctor in an effort to lose weight. For some time now Barbi has been following the Weight Watchers Program. You may or may not know that the protein requirements on this diet call for 3 beef meals per week, 3-5 fish meals per week, 4 eggs per week, 1 liver meal per week and other selected protein substitutes.

There will be occasions when Barbi needs some special consideration as she plans her meals in the cafeteria. I am requesting that you and the cafeteria staff work with her in this endeavor.

CM
CM:gcd

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CARSON-NEWMAN COLLEGE

February 22, 1988

Mr. and Mrs. James Amos
7070 Wentworth Drive
Plantation, Florida 33566

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Amos:

I want you to know how proud we are of the accomplishments of our Forensics Team this year and especially the major role played by your son, Doug, in their success. The duet of Doug and Jennie Lee are known nationally for their talent and they are major contenders to win the National Championship in April. In fact, this pair is so powerful they had over three hundred parents in tears during a serious routine they presented for Parents Day last fall.

Although we get a lot of publicity for our athletic prowress, we are just as proud of our outstanding Forensics Team. I assure you that in our eyes Doug is a genuine "All-American". You have done an exceptional job rearing this young man and we are privileged to have him on our campus.

Enclosed is a clipping that appeared in the CARSON-NEWMAN MAGAZINE. This publication is distributed to some 15,000 alumni and friends of the college.

Parents Day is Saturday, October 8, this year. I hope to see you then.

Most sincerely,

Cordell Maddox
President

CM:mk
Enclosure

JEFFERSON CITY TENNESSEE 37760 615 475 9061

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CARSON-NEWMAN COLLEGE
ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT
JEFFERSON CITY, TENNESSEE 37760

March 18, 1988

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brown
321 Freemont Street
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 41681

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Brown:

According to Larry you have seen everything taking him to baseball practice and attending his games over the years. This may be but it gives me little consolation about the way I feel right now.

I have been in baseball a long time and have seen many freak accidents. However, you never expect to be involved in one - especially one that may cost a young man the opportunity of his playing career and the team a real shot at the conference championships.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown, you folks have been so nice about this matter and I can't say too many good things about how Larry is accepting the accident as no big deal. I am so grateful for your attitude. I've known some parents who would have had me shot for stepping on their son's finger while rushing out of the dugout to protest a call. If it weren't for the support and understanding of a great team forgiving the blunder that benched their star pitcher I may consider doing it myself!

Well I just wanted to get this off my chest. I hope you can join us for the game Thursday here on campus.

Sincerely,

Tom Long
Head Baseball Coach

TL/es

"Athletics with a Purpose"

CARSON-NEWMAN COLLEGE
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

May 31, 1988

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Ray
Route 2, Box 15A
Meadows, VA 21563

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Ray,

The Carson-Newman Alumni Association held a reception for young alumni in Louisville, Kentucky. While there four of our recent grads (whom you will recognize in the enclosed photo) shared a story that warmed my heart.

I had no idea that your Mary and John were so close to Bob and Joan Cole. Of course I had seen them together on campus but did not know that you kept Bob and Joan for those years while their parents served as missionaries.

Your love for these young people has helped to mold them into very special individuals. They had so much to say about your influence on their lives. After hearing their testimony one can understand why they are attending seminary together to prepare for Christian service.

It has been said that you never graduate from Carson-Newman because of the close relationships formed here. However, I must give you the credit for the close relationship between these four.

This photo was taken just for you at their request. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

Nelson Ross, Director
Alumni Relations

NR/es

YOU ARE CARSON-NEWMAN

CARSON-NEWMAN COLLEGE

JEFFERSON CITY, TENNESSEE 37760
615-475-9061

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 19, 1988

Mr. and Mrs. John Lane
12 Benton Place
Nashville, TN 37112

Dear John and Alice:

Good students have always been the most important members of the Carson-Newman family, and I appreciate the part you have played in Margo's attending this great school.

Visitors to our campus are always impressed with the happy faces, caring attitudes, and friendly "hellos" of our students. In fact, I must admit to being impressed with these fine young people--even after being here twelve years. Believe me, the quality of our students makes my work much easier and is a major reason for our success year after year.

A student photographer recently captured this typical campus scene outside the cafeteria. As you know, Margo and Jane are best friends. They have become an institution here.

I hope you enjoy the snapshot. As you can see, college is not all work and no play!

Most sincerely,

J. Cordell Maddox
President

JCM:mk

Enclosure

CARSON-NEWMAN COLLEGE

PARENTS ASSOCIATION

April 10, 1988

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Wilson
P. O. Box 1200
Nashville, Tennessee 37142

Dear Ed and Carol,

Things just aren't the same without you on the Parents Association Executive Committee this year. You certainly left your mark as co-chairs of our Events Committee. For instance, you did your work so well that the committee has changed very little from the annual program you established!

I have had you on my mind for some time and just wanted to thank you for a job well done. Your standard of excellence will be an example to parent volunteers for years to come.

People like you make being president of this organization fun!

We'll be in Nashville for a lecture tour of the state museum conducted by Professor James Elliott, Saturday, September 3, 2:00 p.m. I look forward to seeing you there.

Yours sincerely,

Bob

Bob Love, President
Parents Association

BL/es

BOX 1988 • CNC • JEFFERSON CITY, TENNESSEE 37760 • (615) 475-9061 EXT. 222

Chapter 12

Communicating Effectively And Efficiently with Parents

Mary New
Executive Secretary
The University of Iowa Parents Association

Parents receive information about their student s college environment through a variety of sources. The most common communication—and, we hope, the most frequent—comes from the student. Letters and phone calls home are often full of news about the institution. News about classes, social events, professors, and athletic wins and losses reaches parents through the perspective of the student. Alumni, friends, and parents of other students also carry messages to the parent.

Media often play a dominant role in communicating the happenings at the local college or university. Parents learn more about the student's institution through "hometown stories" in the local papers, featuring newsworthy items about local students. They read about important research taking place at the institution. And if the student is attending a state-supported college or university, parents are kept up-to-date on budget and other legislative issues facing the institution.

While all of these messages are easily accessible and readily available to parents, they all come from sources over which the institution has little or no control.

The Princeton Parents Project, sponsored by the Exxon Education Foundation and Princeton University, surveyed 91 colleges and universities during 1985-86 and discovered that parents wanted more information about their student's institution—from the institution. And they particularly wanted more personal communication in any form. They wanted the institution to show

some appreciation for the sacrifices they were making to send their son or daughter to the school. They also wanted reassurance that the institution was, in fact, the best place for their child.

We who are involved in parents programs know that this is true. Woodrow Wilson, when he was president of Princeton University, once lost his patience with an anxious mother who wanted to be sure that Princeton was the best place for her child. "Madam," said Wilson, "we guarantee satisfaction or you will get your son back."

Coordinate your parent-directed communications

Develop a family of communications to parents that are targeted to each phase of their involvement with the institution.

Admissions. Begin your communications early. Admissions offices can play a key role in helping to create an institutional message directed to parents. Recent data tell us that parents usually read thoroughly all admissions publications. You can use these publications to promote your institution's parent programming and to reassure prospective parents that they, too, are important to the institution.

If your institution has a parents office or parent liaison, include that information in admissions materials. Give parents an opportunity to plan ahead by including important dates such as Parents Day, Honors Day, and other campus events that they will want to attend.

Working closely with admissions and other student service offices, keep the communications flowing by attending new student receptions and send-off parties in local communities. Your attendance at these events demonstrates your institution's belief in the importance of parents in the admissions process and creates excellent visibility for your parents programs. It also gives anxious parents a name and a face to remember if they need help in the future.

Orientation. Make sure that your institution's orientation program has a parents component. It is not only the new student who needs to learn what to expect from college life; his or her parents do too. Positive contact from the beginning will involve parents with the institution and keep them involved throughout the student's stay on campus.

If your institution has a separate office responsible for orientation, be sure that your parents office shares in the program responsibilities and offers to help mix and mingle. It is vital that you get to know the parents early and in a relaxed setting so that they will be comfortable hearing from you in the future.

Parents handbook. Work with other student services offices to develop a parents handbook. The handbook should be distributed to parents of all new freshmen. If possible, you should update it annually and send it to *all* parents. This important reference guide can include sections on academic and residen-

tial life, university resources, facilities and services, and campus history and lore. It should contain a campus calendar, a map, and important phone numbers. It might also include several helpful information sources such as local hotel/restaurant listings and local vicinity maps.

And don't miss this opportunity to promote the institution's parents program. Include a list of activities for parents, important dates of parent activities, parents office/liaison phone number and address, names and phone numbers of parents committee members, and a special message from the president affirming the importance the institution places upon knowledgeable, informed, and involved parents.

A sampling of parents handbooks from both public and private institutions (Figure 12-1 at the end of the chapter) indicates the variety of shapes, sizes, and formats most commonly used. The guides range in length from 16 pages to 42 pages. Most use two-color printing and quality paper stock.

Parents newsletter. Parents newsletters are the most common and the most popular form of direct communication from institution to parent. Specifically designed for parents, the newsletter is the perfect vehicle to provide accurate and timely information about the institution and to keep parents abreast of issues of current interest and importance. If you are not able to publish a newsletter specifically designed for parents, you may want to consider incorporating a special section of parents news into an existing publication, a pull-out section in your alumni magazine, for example. Figure 12-2 shows newsletters published in 8½ by 11 and 8½ by 16 tabloid formats.

Standard features of a parents newsletter include a question-and-answer session with the president on a variety of student/parent concerns; faculty and student profiles; news features on upcoming parent activities; university calendar including weekend events on campus; and a listing of on-campus sources of help for the student (counseling, career planning, time management, and so on).

If at all possible, include a parent voice in the publication. Recently we had the good fortune to receive a copy of a letter a parent had sent to his freshman son advising him on how to have a successful college career. The letter was long but well-written and full of love. We received the parent's permission to publish it in a three-part series in our parents newsletter. Since its publication in 1987, we continue to receive requests for reprints of the entire letter.

To communicate effectively and efficiently, a parents newsletter should be sent to all parents free. Frequency of publication can vary from two issues a year to weekly issues, depending on the resources of the parents office and the needs of the parents. The Princeton Parents Project survey found that most parents newsletters were issued three or four times a year. The parents should receive their first copy of the newsletter during the summer preceding the student's freshman year.

The newsletter's size, shape, format, and frequency will depend on staff and budget. But a parents newsletter that shows institutional concern for parents

and also keeps this important constituency better informed and more involved is well worth the time and expense.

Be sure to circulate the newsletter to on-campus offices that are directly involved in student/parent concerns. Not only does this lend credibility to your effort, but it helps to keep the internal lines of communication open.

Alumni and development support

Parents may also belong to other constituencies of your institution; they may be alumni or major donors to the institution, for example. For this reason, as well as others, it is vital that you develop a strong relationship with the alumni and development offices. Keep them informed of current issues that would be of interest to parents, and publicize your parents outreach activities to them. The alumni magazine and development publications can provide extra exposure for your parent programming.

Parents office

If at all possible, establish a parents office on campus. This office should be responsible for coordinating all institutional parent activities; it should serve as an on-campus liaison for parents.

Once you have established such an office, publicize its services as widely as possible, using all your institutional publications to broadcast the address and phone number. No matter if the parent has a freshman or a senior student, problems and concerns can surface at any time, and usually a parent does not know where to find the answers. If parents know there is a parents office on campus, one phone call can usually put them in touch with the appropriate department, dean, or service to answer the question or solve the problem.

To provide this service, the parents office staff must have campus-wide credibility and an active working relationship with all campus departments that are involved in student service areas. Perhaps the best way for you to build credibility, exchange ideas, and gather information about issues facing parents and students is to convene a monthly meeting of all representatives who work in these areas. This would include personnel from residence halls, admissions, academic affairs, academic advising, counseling service, and undergraduate collegiate deans. The meeting provides an excellent opportunity for you to share specific parent concerns and to spot any problems that may be developing in this constituency. Getting this group together may also help prevent duplication of effort and programming and calendar conflicts.

Special communications projects

Whenever possible, work to broaden your communications efforts—going beyond publications and incorporating other media—by thinking creatively and employing special projects on a limited basis. Team up with your public relations office to produce public service announcements of interest to parents. An interview with your parents weekend chair will publicize this event and convey valuable information to parents, and most statewide radio networks are eager to provide this service to their listeners.

TV messages. Many institutions have access to some unpaid television time. Local stations are usually very happy to run your PSA if you get it to them by their deadline. These same local stations schedule community affairs programming and will often welcome a guest from the local college or university. Also, do not forget your homegrown and readily available college radio stations and cable television program possibilities.

Some universities have golden opportunities to present their own "institutional message" during halftime of regionally or nationally televised football and basketball games. Many colleges and universities televise all or part of their football or basketball games on a statewide television network. The terms of these television contracts usually allow for university-produced television spots to highlight the institution's achievements.

Two years ago, The University of Iowa included a two-minute feature on the university's Dad of the Year as part of its television package. The message was obvious—The University of Iowa cares deeply about its parents and the contributions and sacrifices they make for their students. The university produced the spot and ran it on a rotating basis with five other university messages during both football and basketball seasons.

The Dad of the Year spot went as follows:

> **Narrator:** A lot of Iowans are like Glen Regennitter of Oxford Junction, The University of Iowa Dad of the Year. He grew up in rural Iowa, in difficult economic times. He was part of a generation of Americans who yearned to further their education but didn't have the opportunity. He struggled to make that opportunity available for his children.
>
> **Mary Ankenbauer** (Glen Regennitter's daughter and a medical student at The University of Iowa): I wanted to tell people about someone who was very much like them. Someone who had done the best with what they had. And I felt that that kind of person was something that was held up in honor. Something for people to say, "Yeah, that's like me, and I'm doing a good job." It's not the usual success story, his is a success in a different way. A quiet success of a man who set out to do something for his children and helped them through it.

Narrator: After 30 years of employment with two implement dealers, Glen Regennitter started his own business. Now Glen and his wife, Rosine, together run a small farm machinery repair shop.

Ankenbauer: She's very good at picking out feelings. . .she's also a very good businesswoman. Mom's an excellent bookkeeper and secretary for Dad's business. So they make a good team.

Narrator: Many entries were submitted for the Dad of the Year award. Mary says her entry was from all members of her family.

Ankenbauer: I wrote it not only for myself but for my brothers and sister. I really had that sense that we were all writing it, because it was our way of saying to our parents, "Thanks for what you've done for all of us."

The Freshman Calling Project. This project won a CASE Gold Medal Award in 1986. It began nine years before in response to the findings of a study of enrollment patterns at The University of Iowa. The study revealed that prospective students and their parents perceived The University of Iowa as a large, impersonal institution where there was less concern for the individual than at other institutions. The study also highlighted the concerns of parents of prospective students as to the availability of academic support services and many other hoped-for aspects of student life.

This study led to a number of changes in the way the university related to prospective and new students and their parents. The University of Iowa Parents Association, the function of which was to develop parents into a supportive constituency, now extended its activities to parents of prospective students, and one of its major outreach programs was the Freshman Calling Project.

The calls take place in the fall. Upperclassmen telephone the parents of all new freshmen and ask them if they have any questions or concerns about their student's adjustment to the university. This is not a fund-raising effort; the emphasis is on opening a dialogue and identifying questions. Follow-up is provided by the office of the vice president for student services; this conveys the message that the university—from the top level down—is interested in parents' concerns.

The reactions range from astonishment to gratitude with an occasional touch of irritation. Most parents, however, are delighted at the opportunity to talk about concerns, offer advice, or even pay compliments. Many are touched (and surprised) that a Big Ten university would care enough to call—and not even ask for money.

This year, and every year since 1977, the families of some 3,700 freshmen received a phone call that began something like this:

Hello, this is Sarah. I'm one of several students who are calling from the campus tonight for The University of Iowa Parents Association.

> We're talking to parents of this year's freshmen just to see how things are going from your point of view. . . .

The Freshman Calling Project is sponsored by the office of the vice president for student services and coordinated by the director of the Parents Association. Ten students work four nights a week (Monday through Thursday) for approximately four weeks. The director of the Parents Association hires the students and supervises the calling sessions.

Student callers, who are paid slightly more than the minimum wage, attend an orientation session the week before the project begins. The callers have a script to follow and forms to record the responses. They learn the importance of keeping responses confidential, and they are instructed not to try to answer any of the questions or give advice to the parents. If the parent mentions a specific problem or concern, the student is instructed to listen carefully and sympathetically (without passing judgment), and then say:

> I understand the [problem, question, situation, or concern]. I can't provide the solution myself, but I'll see that someone in the university looks into it and gets back in touch with you. May I do that? Would you mind if we had someone from the university contact your student? Incidentally, where did you get the information about the problem?

During the 1987 project, student callers spoke with 3,054 parents (82 percent of total calls attempted); 92 percent of the parents contacted were enthusiastic about their students' experiences during the first week on campus. As we expected, not all parents were positive, but only 8 percent (or 244) reported a complaint or problem, including students' difficulties with foreign-speaking teaching assistants as well as concern about residence hall conditions, cutbacks in financial aid, and increases in tuition.

Complaints about foreign teaching assistants confirmed a problem the university had already recognized. In response, the university began a program to improve the language skills and orientation of its foreign graduate students.

Other concerns were less serious; for example, some parents wanted to know how to send a personalized birthday cake to a student. As a result of these inquiries, the residence hall food service now offers birthday cakes.

The negative comments and the questions naturally receive the greatest attention from the university. The vice president for student services coordinates follow-up and obtains the information needed from the appropriate office or department. Most responses are made by mail, but urgent ones are handled by phone. Obviously, some problems cannot be solved by a call or letter, but these quick responses attempt to assure parents that efforts will be made to help their student.

Positive comments also receive attention. They are referred to the appropriate departments, where they boost morale and provide visibility within the university for the Parents Association.

The project has produced one unanticipated result—it has led to greater cooperation between the university offices that deal with new students and their parents. The program has become a vehicle through which the Parents Association relates to other university entities, such as residence services, financial aid, academic advising, student health, and the counseling service. Each of these offices is now committed to its role in helping new students resolve their problems.

If you would like to develop a freshman calling project at your institution, here's how to do it:

1. Make certain that key offices in the institution, such as student services, are supportive and prepared to respond to complaints and kudos.
2. Personally interview and select student callers who will make a good impression.
3. Develop a script that can be followed easily.
4. Make the calls within a month to six weeks after the beginning of fall classes. By then parents have had an opportunity to receive feedback from their student and to identify questions and problems, but they haven't had time to develop a head of steam or sense of grievance about their student's troubles.
5. Make certain that comments and complaints are properly recorded during the calling process. Callers should be instructed not to attempt to answer questions or resolve problems. Their role is to channel parents' concerns to the appropriate campus office.
6. Above all, be sure this is not a superficial activity. Plan on quick follow-up and assistance where needed and expect to hear from parents with greater frequency once you've identified yourself as a friendly, on-campus contact.
7. Publicize the project within the institution. This will give the parents association visibility and encourage cooperation.

A calling project is only one of many means to bring parents into the communication loop. At The University of Iowa we have found this program to be one of our most effective methods of outreach. While the effort is not directed toward fund raising, the program unquestionably contributes to the long-term development of support on the part of parents and their sons and daughters.

Conclusion

The goal of all communications with parents should be to keep them fully informed of the institution's mission, character, priorities, and aspirations. The

successful parents communications program must examine, campus-wide, how well this constituency is now being informed and engaged. Ultimately, any successful plan depends upon the cooperative planning and coordinated effort of those units charged with parent communication responsibilities. These entities need to share a thorough and common understanding of mission, priorities, opportunities, and challenges confronting the institution.

Effective communications activities are a critical means of displaying institutional values and purpose, and those that are best conceived and implemented should result in greater understanding and support for the institution.

Figure 12-1: Parents Handbooks

Figure 12-2: Parents Newsletters

Chapter 13

Parent Records: Tracking Down and Keeping Track Of Parents

Don Collins, Director of Parents and Senior Program
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Barbara Habel, Director of Development, College of Arts and Sciences
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

David Lanier, University Registrar
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Summer is beginning. In just a few weeks freshmen will descend upon the campus. While the dorms are being readied for the onslaught, you must prepare for your first year as director of the new parents program. Where do you begin?

Before you can make your dream of record-breaking parents funds and successful parents weekends a reality, you must develop a database of reliable records that will enable you to contact your parent constituency. Begin by asking yourself why you need this information. The answer will not only clarify your own needs, but should also help you convince your institution to make a commitment to maintaining parent records.

Start by outlining a series of objectives that good parent records will help you accomplish. Obviously, these objectives should closely parallel your goals for establishing a parents program in the first place. Each of the following is an important reason for maintaining parent records:

1. Fund raising: For most institutions, this is the bottom-line reason for a parents program. The success of parent phonathons and leadership gift programs will always be limited by your access to current and correct information about each parent. After conducting our first extensive parent phonathon at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), we were able to estimate to the administration that correct phone numbers on the incomplete parent records (25 percent) would have generated an additional $200,000 of unrestricted funds. This makes a persuasive argument.

2. Programming for parents: Most colleges and universities are committed to involving parents as much as possible in the educational experience of their children. Five years ago at UNC-CH, the only communication parents received from the university was a bill. Now they receive *Carolina Family* (a quarterly publication for parents), an invitation to Parents Weekend, and information on other campus activities. Again, this sort of regular contact with parents, vital to developing a strong relationship, is dependent upon the quality of your parent records.

3. Contact with young alumni: Getting a correct address for recently graduated students is always a challenge. But if you maintain and update parent information, you will be able to track down many of your lost alumni.

Systems

Once you have convinced your administration—and yourself—that maintaining a database of parent records is the foundation of a successful parents program, you must make some decisions about setting up a computerized system. A good computer system is a prerequisite to maintaining a flexible, accessible database of parent records; few—if any—institutions have a parent constituency so small they can keep viable hardcopy records. Long gone is the day of the three-by-five card.

At most institutions, you'll have two options: to adapt and utilize the computer system already in place in your registrar's office, or to set up and maintain your own separate database. Which option you select will depend on the size of your parent constituency, the capabilities of your own computer, and the adaptability of your registrar's office.

After several years of trial and error, we have established a system at UNC-CH that represents a compromise of the above options. We use the existing alumni/development computer system for parent gift records; we assign special nonalumni identification numbers to nonalumni parents. We enter a special code on the ID screens for all parents, including alumni, to identify them by the year of graduation of their student. Parents of incoming freshmen in the fall of 1989 are identified as "P94," parents of sophomores as "P93," and so on. This allows us to tailor mailings to parents of the different classes, as well

as to delete nonalumni parent records for those parents who do not contribute for two years after their child's graduation.

Figure 13-1 at the end of the chapter shows some of the various screens that we use.

Although the computer system has helped tremendously, we still must use mailing labels produced through the registrar's office for mass mailings, since these records are updated most frequently. We are working toward a better system in which the information will be formatted in such a way that the systems can communicate with each other and data can be downloaded. This will give us ready access to an independent system with records updated and maintained by the registrar's office, which has primary contact with the students.

Obtaining parent information

Now that you have decided why you need the information and how your computer system will be set up, you must determine what information you need in order to enhance your program. We use the card shown in Figure 13-2 to obtain the information we find necessary.

Once you have decided what you need to know and developed a form on which to record this information, you must schedule a time and devise a method to collect it. Parent information can be the hardest type of information to gather, but at most institutions there are several likely opportunities:

1. Admissions: All students have to apply for admission to the university, so this is probably the best place to start. The admissions application will contain some parent information. Consider enclosing a parent information card in the admissions packet along with a return envelope. Students and parents are usually meticulous about completing all information in admissions packets, so your rate of response should be good.

Figure 13-3 shows the section of UNC-CH's application for admission that contains parent information.

2. Cashier's office: Bills, bills, bills. Someone has to pay them, and someone has to mail them. The cashier's office may be a good source of parent addresses.

3. Registration: Our big coup at UNC-CH came when we began working with the university registrar's office. The office agreed to require students to fill out parent information on matriculation/registration cards. We designed registration forms on which we could print out current parent information for continuing students to review and correct. New students receive special matriculation cards.

At a special checkpoint during registration, we ask students to review and update their parent information. In order to accomplish this, we had to provide nearly double the staff in the registration arena, but the development office

nearly double the staff in the registration arena, but the development office agreed to help pay the costs because of the obvious benefits to the parents program. Figures 13-4 and 13-5 show the data verification card and the address alert system we use during registration.

4. Publications: Developing a specific publication for parents not only allows you to communicate effectively with them, but also enables you to update and check their addresses. Since parents enjoy receiving this publication, they will often send you change-of-address information. A specific statement on your publication will increase the probability that they might do this. In every issue of *Carolina Family,* we include the following statement:

> Carolina Family is published for families of undergraduates at UNC-Chapel Hill. A special issue for parents of entering students is published each summer.
>
> Send address changes, suggestions and comments to: Ann W. Clark, editor, CAROLINA FAMILY, P.O. Box 309, Chapel Hill, NC 27514-0309, (919) 962-2336. Published by The Carolina Parents Association, The Carolina Fund and the Office of Student Affairs.

It may also be worth the cost of extra postage to send an annual address correction mailing.

5. Parent information cards: Parents *want* to be included. Mail parents of incoming freshmen a "welcome to the university family" letter, along with a parents association information card for them to fill out and return.

6. Orientation: Get involved in the summer orientation program for new students. At The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we invite parents of incoming freshmen to the orientation program. This provides us with another opportunity to obtain parent information.

You may wish to try several of the methods described in this chapter. The more you do, the more sources of information you will have to check and double-check your records.

Conclusion

Embarking on a new parents program is exciting, but the chore of collecting and maintaining records on parents may, at first glance, seem to be the least glamorous part of the process. Nevertheless, a database of parent records is the sine qua non of a growing parents program. You cannot bring these important people into your institutional family until you know *who* they are and *where* they are. Parent records are the link you need to reach those who can become your institution's most loyal supporters.

Figure 13-1: Computer Screens for Parents Records

Identification Screen

Last Name, Suf First, Mid Name Title Name Chg Sex

Address Line 1 Address Line 2 Phone #

City St Zip Geo Addr Chng Addr Pref

Couple Spouse ID J/M D-N-S F/S Death Yr

Special Codes Birth Date P/A E/G

MBR EXP Date Life Membr# Class Pref Level Rec Type Gift Pledge

Business Screen

Employer Occ Occ Title Sal Bus Phone

Busines Address 1 Business Address 2 E/S E/S Chg

Business City St Zip Date Addr Chg Company MGC

Ocupational Duties Service Provided

Totals Screen

First Name
Last Name

FY Totals Gifts Gik Designation

All Time
Curr Year
1st Prior
2nd Prior
3rd Prior
Largest Yr

Last Gift
Largest Gift

Contact Appeal Prev Appeal Hold Appeal Date Rating

Figure 13-2: Parents Information Card

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL
PARENTS INFORMATION

Name of Current Carolina Student(s) _____ Class Year _____
_____ _____
Other Sons/Daughters Who Attended Carolina Name _____ Class Year _____
Name _____ _____

FATHER

Name _____
Home Address _____
Home Phone# (____) _____
Carolina Alumnus ☐Yes ☐No _____ Year
Employer _____
Title _____
Business Address _____
_____

GRANDPARENTS

Name _____
Address _____
_____
Carolina Alumni ☐Yes ☐No _____ Year(s)

MOTHER

Name _____
Home Address _____
Home Phone# (____) _____
Carolina Alumna ☐Yes ☐No _____ Year
Employer _____
Title _____
Business Address _____
_____

GRANDPARENTS

Name _____
Address _____
_____
Carolina Alumni ☐Yes ☐No _____ Year(s)

☐ Please Mail Parents Association Information Separately to Each Parent.

Figure 13-3: Family Information from Application

FAMILY INFORMATION

Father: Living ___, Deceased ___ Mother: Living ___, Deceased ___ Guardian (if applicable)

Name: _____ Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____ Address: _____

_____ _____ _____

Occupation: _____ Occupation: _____ Occupation: _____

Home Telephone _____ Home Telephone _____ Home Telephone _____

Work Telephone _____ Work Telephone _____ Work Telephone _____

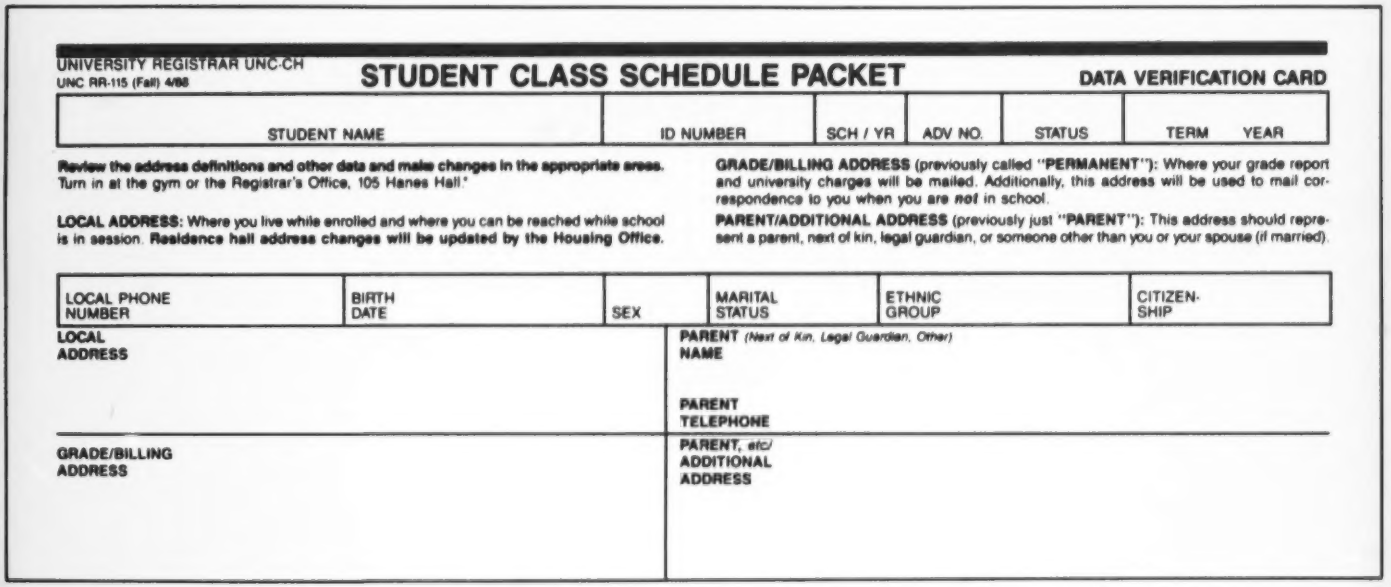
Did either of your parents attend college in North Carolina? Yes _____ No _____ If so, which institution?

_____ When? _____

LIST RELATIVES, INCLUDING PARENTS, WHO ATTENDED UNC-CH

Name	Dates of Attendance	Relationship	Name	Dates of Attendance	Relationship

Figure 13-4: Data Verification Card



UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR UNC-CH
UNC RR-115 (Fall) 4/88

STUDENT CLASS SCHEDULE PACKET — **DATA VERIFICATION CARD**

STUDENT NAME	ID NUMBER	SCH / YR	ADV NO.	STATUS	TERM YEAR

Review the address definitions and other data and make changes in the appropriate areas. Turn in at the gym or the Registrar's Office, 105 Hanes Hall.*

LOCAL ADDRESS: Where you live while enrolled and where you can be reached while school is in session. **Residence hall address changes will be updated by the Housing Office.**

GRADE/BILLING ADDRESS (previously called "**PERMANENT**"): Where your grade report and university charges will be mailed. Additionally, this address will be used to mail correspondence to you when you are ***not*** in school.

PARENT/ADDITIONAL ADDRESS (previously just "**PARENT**"): This address should represent a parent, next of kin, legal guardian, or someone other than you or your spouse (if married).

LOCAL PHONE NUMBER	BIRTH DATE	SEX	MARITAL STATUS	ETHNIC GROUP	CITIZEN-SHIP

LOCAL ADDRESS

PARENT *(Next of Kin, Legal Guardian, Other)* **NAME**

PARENT TELEPHONE

GRADE/BILLING ADDRESS

PARENT, *etc/* **ADDITIONAL ADDRESS**

Figure 13-5: Address Alert

ADDRESS ALERT!

Below are the definitions of the three addresses the Office of the University Registrar maintains for each student.

Please take a moment and review these definitions. **If you feel a correction is needed based on the new definitions below, please correct in the appropriate areas.** You may turn this form in at the Address Table in the basement of Hanes Hall during Pre-Registration Week or as soon as possible to Room 105, Hanes Hall, CB 2100, UNC-CH, 27599. We will then update your address file as you indicate below:

YOUR NAME_____
Last Name First Mi

SSN_____ **Date** _____

LOCAL ADDRESS: This address represents where you are living while enrolled and where you can be reached while school is in session. **If you live in a residence hall, any residence hall address change will be updated by the Housing Office.**

Street _____ **Tel.No.**_____

City _____ (if other than Chapel Hill) **Zip**_____

GRADE/BILLING ADDRESS: (Previously called **"PERMANENT"**) This address is where your grade report and university charges will be mailed. Additionally, this address will be used to mail correspondence to you when you are not in school.

Street _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

PARENT/ADDITIONAL ADDRESS: (Previously just **"Parent"**) This address should represent a parent, next of kin, legal guardian, or someone other than you or your spouse (if married).

Parent/ Other _____
Last Name First Mi

Parent/ Other Address _____
Street City

_____ (____) _____
State Zip Parent Telephone No.

Section 4

Capitalizing on Parents' Talents

Chapter 14

Parents—Who Needs Them? We Do!

Barbara Tipsord Todd
Assistant Director, Alumni and Parent Services
Illinois State University

"Oh boy. Another job to do and another constituency group with which to work. Parents—they frequently aren't even alumni so have no formal ties to the institution and could probably care less about the university. And besides, what can they do for us anyway?"

These are all too often the thoughts of an institutional advancement officer who has been asked to begin an organized program for parents. But if we take a closer look, we will understand how and why every college and university does, in fact, need its parent population and can, with little effort and few resources, make this special constituency work for the institution.

Many colleges and universities like to consider themselves a family, with students, faculty, staff, administration, and alumni the family members. Parents can easily become an extended branch of this family, and the rewards will prove both direct and indirect.

Parents can greatly increase the peripheral support for your institution. Although it might appear as though these people have no formal ties to your institution (unless they are alumni themselves), they actually have the strongest ties of all—their children. They have entrusted your institution with their children's lives, both present and future. The presence of their children on your campus shows their trust in and respect for your institution. It's true that most parents allow their children to make their own decision about which college to attend. But the respect and trust must be there, no matter who makes the decision.

Just think of the many applications received each year because a neighbor, relative, colleague, or friend has spoken highly of the education his or her child received at your institution. While you'll never know how many people apply to your college or university because of a good word from a parent of a student or former student, you can be sure your admissions staff is grateful for those informal referrals. We all count on a great deal of support from our "friends," and certainly a large part of this population consists of the parents of students and former students.

An active parents program can improve the retention rate at your institution. If parents are pleased with the institution and feel good about it, their feelings may be passed on to their students. An active parents program can also provide information about services to help students who are having problems at the institution.

Involving a parent may also result in an involved student. Parents who feel good enough about an institution to want to assist may encourage the student, through their example, to become involved as well.

And don't overlook the hands-on support parents can provide. We all know how important alumni volunteers are in alumni and fund-raising programs. Parents can provide the same type of volunteer service for parents programs and activities. From working registration tables at campus functions, to hosting new students in their homes, to representing the institution at college nights, to providing panel members for career programs, parents can greatly increase your pool of potential volunteers and extend your staff.

As you formulate the goals of your parents program, don't think of this constituency only as parents; think of them as ambassadors, lobbyists, public relations agents, recruiters, donors, solicitors, trustees, hosts, career placement specialists, counselors, panelists, and volunteers. This will open your eyes to the many ways in which parents can help your institution.

Whom should you involve in a parents organization?

This branch of your extended family needn't include only parents of current students. Parents are frequently willing to remain involved for a short period after their student has graduated, especially if their experiences with the institution and the parents program have been positive.

If your institution has a large number of third- (or more) generation students, you may want to organize a separate program for grandparents. And you might also consider a special weekend activity for siblings of students; think of all the potential students who would enjoy a weekend on campus—and would remember it a few years later when they were making their college choices.

The success of your parents program depends on keeping track of the parent population (see Chapter 13 for more on this topic). This task is no easier with

parents than it is with donors or alumni. At a small institution, you may keep your own address records; this means you will have control over additions, deletions, and corrections. At large institutions, however, you will probably depend on records obtained and managed by the registrar's office. If your institution's student registration procedures include a step to verify parents' names and mailing addresses, your task is easier. If not, you need to lobby to have this step added.

However, as with nearly any mailing list, the information becomes outdated almost immediately. And some students, for various reasons, elect not to provide parent information.

No matter how you acquire your mailing lists, make every effort to include everyone who wants to be involved. For example, if a student's parents are divorced or separated, both parents may want to participate in parents programs. Many registrar's offices are sensitive to this concern and have allocated space in student record systems for the names and addresses of two parents.

If at all possible, let the student determine who should receive information on parents programs and services. He or she may wish to include a grandparent, sibling, or other family member who serves as a guardian.

Who should administer the program?

Administration of a parents program can easily be handled from several different areas of campus, depending upon the goals of your organization. If fund-raising activities are the major thrust of the program, the annual fund or development office should administer the program. A program that concentrates mainly on student recruitment would best be administered from the admissions office. However, if activities and services will be diversified, either the alumni office or the student affairs office could run the program.

A joint effort might be the answer. One office could coordinate the major administration while staff members from other campus offices handle specific programs and projects. For example, the alumni office may serve as the parents headquarters with a development staff member directing fund-raising programs, an admissions staff handling student recruitment projects, and the student affairs office running parents weekend activities. In such a situation, coordination is essential so that parents are not overwhelmed with mailings, telephone calls, and publicity from the different offices.

What resources will be required?

As with any program, the staff and other resources required can be as little or as much as you have available. Staff time can vary between 5 percent of an

administrator's total load to a full-time person who works solely on the parents program. After your goals have been established and your action plans developed, you will be better able to determine the exact resources needed to accomplish these goals.

Although your parents program will probably be ongoing, you may find you are able to handle the administration of its major programs and events by slipping them in between your other major events. This is not the best solution; but if this is all the time available, even a small amount of parents programming will provide some benefit to your institution.

Even if your parents program involves only one or two major events each year, don't overlook the day-to-day functions of a parents office. An important factor of any parents project, no matter the size of the institution or the structure of the program, is to provide a link between the institution and the parents. MaryMargaret Halsey, coordinator of the Princeton Parents Project, summed it up in a CASE workshop in 1984:

> A successful program for parents should leave them feeling good about the institution, involved in the life of that institution, and less anxious about their child's academic and social situation. In addition, a program should help parents understand not only more about the institution their child attends, but also more about secondary or higher education in general. Children of parents who feel good about their school are more likely themselves to have positive feelings as students and as future graduates.

Therefore, because your office serves as a public relations agency for your institution, there will always be correspondence, telephone calls, articles for publications, printing, and other tasks for you and your staff to handle.

Don't overlook other costs such as printing, postage, telephone, supplies, and so on. You'll have to pay postage to notify the entire parent population of major events and programs; you'll need business reply envelopes for your board correspondence and solicitations, and postage-paid returns for address corrections. You'll have to cover meeting room and refreshment costs for board and committee meetings; gifts and awards for board and committee members; printing for programs, services, and events; and long-distance telephone charges for calls to and from your parent volunteers.

To be or not to be: A formal or an informal program?

Now that you realize a parents program can be both fun and beneficial to your institution, you must decide whether to organize a structured program or work informally with parents.

An informal program. If your resources will not adequately support a formal parents organization complete with a board, organized meetings, and several programs, investigate the possibility of establishing a file of parent volunteers from which you can work. There are probably many parents who would be willing to help your institution if you ask them.

Spread the word to members of your administration that you are starting a file. Tell them your goals for these volunteers and ask them to provide you with the names and addresses of parents they feel might be interested in helping. Advertise the project through articles in publications that parents receive, and invite parents to contact you if they would like to help.

Organize the file according to its purposes. If you plan to use the parents to contact prospective students, keep the names organized in ZIP code order or by geographic locations. If you want to set up a career intern or placement program, list parents according to career areas. Contacts for legislative efforts should be kept by legislative district.

If you feel this is more than you want to take on right now, there are other ways to take advantage of your parent population. Don't miss any opportunity to help parents feel good about your institution: personal contacts while they are visiting campus, articles in publications they receive, and favorable impressions from all sources go a long way toward developing a nonstructured public relations network. These contented parents who speak highly of your institution to their friends and family members will aid your efforts more than you can imagine. Their involvement will breed new and continuing support.

A formal program. There are certain advantages to a formal program. A parents organization and parents services office can both serve as liaisons for parents with problems or concerns. Parents appreciate this help when they are searching for the right phone number or contact person. A parent may feel uneasy talking with a university staff member about a problem or concern, but will gladly voice opinions to another parent. Ask your parent board volunteers for their permission to print and distribute their addresses and phone numbers to other parents for this purpose.

You should also circulate the address and phone number of your office. Parent volunteers and staff members can answer questions and smooth ruffled feathers on a variety of topics. "Why didn't my daughter make the pom-pom squad?" "Where is the survival kit I ordered for my son?" "Where can my daughter go for health care?" "How can my son get moved away from a noisy roommate?" "Whom can I ask to tell my son about a death in our family?" The list goes on.

An organized parents program gives parents a sense of belonging. Our campuses are centered around students; housing, activities, and academics are all planned to make them feel a part of their institution and its community. Parents, too, need to feel as though they have a place within the institutional community. They often fear that their link with their child has been severed when the student leaves home for college. Making parents feel that they are a

part of the student's new environment can help lessen this sense of loss. Parents should also feel there is something for them to do, either with or without their student, at the institution and in the campus community on weekend visits.

Parents are frequently bombarded with direct mail solicitations for various services or goods for their student: birthday cakes, Valentine treats, finals week packages, pen and pencil sets, commemorative plates, scholarship programs, and so on. Although it is difficult if not impossible to monitor solicitations from companies and organizations not associated with the institution (mailing lists can easily be compiled from a campus phone book), a parent board may be able to exercise some type of control over mailings parents receive from the institutional community.

How should your parents program be structured?

Just as the administration of a parents program can vary from campus to campus, so does the structure of the organization itself. Once again, choose a structure that will be most workable within the goals and activities you plan for the organization.

Select a name that clearly reflects what the organization is and who it is for—Parents Association, Dads Association, Moms Association, and so on. It should also include the name of your school, college, or university.

You must also decide who will belong to your organization: Will parents or guardians of all students be automatic members? Will you limit membership in any way? Will you require dues? If you ask parents to join and pay dues, you must be able to provide some benefits for the dues. Will dues-paying members receive a special publication from campus; special invitations or discounted tickets to campus events; and/or expanded privileges at the museum and library?

How will the dues money be used? Will it pay the administrative costs of running the program or the extra benefits members receive? Will it provide scholarships or fund special programs for parents or students on campus?

No matter what form your parents organization takes, it should have these goals—to provide a link between the institution and parents, to keep parents informed about the institution, to expand areas of service for both parents and students, and to create a sense of belonging for parents. To accomplish these goals, your parents organization might include the parents and/or guardians of all students, with an advisory board comprised of selected volunteers. An organization of this type will reach all of your parents, yet also provide you with a volunteer organization of a manageable size.

The members of the advisory board should represent the entire parent population; and they should be able to assist in planning, implementing, and evaluating all the programs and services you provide for this population. In

the early stages, you can select the board members. Your campus administration, including deans and department and unit heads, will probably be able to recommend parents who will be good volunteers. Other recommendations may come from alumni or from students you work with on a daily basis.

Because this board is to be representative of your parent population, consider the following factors when selecting members: geographic location, major and college representation, ethnic and religious background, occupation, age, and so on. These people will be responsible for planning and evaluating programs and services for *all* parents, no matter what personal characteristics they might have. So try to assemble a group that will be able to judge what parents will want to do.

After your first advisory board is in place, have its members assist with the preparation of a constitution and/or bylaws for the organization. Even if you have already prepared these documents, ask your volunteers to review them. Members of the advisory board should have the opportunity to review and approve these documents or modify them if necessary. The constitution should include purposes or goals, membership, governance, meetings, where the campus headquarters will be, and a provision for amendments. It should provide for election or appointment of officers, standing committees, and the advisory board. (The Illinois State University Parents' Association Constitution and Bylaws are included at the end of this chapter.)

As with the first advisory board, you should attempt to ensure that the membership fairly represents the parent and student populations. Enrollment trends will shift over time; a geographic location that provides a large majority of your student population today may provide a much smaller percentage 10 years from now. Therefore, your guidelines should be general and not specific.

The constitution should provide for terms of office for the members of the advisory board. Should board members be allowed to serve only while they have a student at the institution or should they be eligible to continue after the student graduates? How about officers? What about couples or single parents? Do couples receive only one vote or should each spouse have the opportunity to vote? Once again, the advisory board should consider these questions and make decisions that are most in tune with the goals of the organization.

You will probably select the first advisory board, but the constitution should spell out how subsequent board members will be selected. You may continue to get names for nomination from campus colleagues. As the word about the parents association spreads to other parents, names will crop up at campus events, through inquiries in the mail, and from students. One way to deal with potential volunteers is to ask them to complete an application, which can be evaluated in terms of current board needs for equal representation, their perceptions of the association and advisory board, and their ability to attend meetings on campus or wherever meetings are held. Figure 14-1 at the end of the chapter is the application ISU uses.

How you deal with these applications will depend on your particular needs and the type of organization you've established. The advisory board or the administrator of the parents program can review the applications; however, if the latter, be sure to give the advisory board an opportunity to accept or reject applicants. As your board becomes better established, you may begin to have more applicants than vacancies. You should establish a policy for dealing with this. Will you hold applications until more vacancies occur? If more than one applicant meets all the criteria for a vacancy, how will you choose?

Once the advisory board has reviewed and accepted applicants, the parents should be notified of their appointment to the board. At ISU, the university president sends each parent a letter inviting him or her to become a member of the advisory board. The administrator of the parents services office follows up with all necessary information: a copy of the constitution and bylaws, a list of all advisory board members, details on the next meeting, and other pertinent facts.

You and the advisory board will need to determine how frequently the board should meet. In its survey of parents programs, Princeton University found that some parents organizations meet as often as six times each year while others meet only once. If the board is to be actively involved in a major event, it should meet at least twice each year: once to establish plans for the event and once to evaluate the event after it is over—before beginning plans for next year.

When you are scheduling meetings, remember that many of your board members will have to travel to campus. If you plan meetings around campus events, parents can combine in one trip the board meeting, a visit to their student, and attendance at the cultural/entertainment activities your institution offers.

An active parents association may need one or more committees to aid in its efforts. These committees can be comprised of current advisory board members and/or other parents who are not board members. Perhaps you could ask applicants who are not selected for the board to serve on these committees. A representative from the advisory board should sit on each committee, and you may ask that individual to chair the committee. This will strengthen the link between the advisory board and the committee and will ensure that the committee acts in the best interests of the institution and the advisory board.

You can establish committees to do any of the tasks mentioned above or to help with any of the programs discussed below. You might also find a nominating committee helpful to screen applications for advisory board vacancies and to select a slate of officers each year (or as stated in the constitution).

How do you keep parents involved in the institutional community?

Your parent constituency is an important part of your institutional family. Were it not for their children, your institution would cease to exist. For this reason,

your group of volunteer parents, no matter how small, must believe not only that you understand their importance, but that the rest of your administration does too. If possible, have a seat reserved for a parent or parent advisory board member on your foundation board, board of trustees, and alumni board. Parents have a right to know what is going on and to be heard on matters that involve their children. Decisions made by the board of trustees on tuition, academic affairs, housing, and other campus matters affect parents as well as students.

If your parents organization is involved in fund-raising programs, the dollars collected will most likely be contributed through your institution's foundation. The foundation board and staff must then work closely with the parents organization to administer and distribute the funds in the manner outlined by the organization.

You can use the methods below to show parent volunteers that they are an important part of the institutional family. Many of these suggestions will keep parents informed about the happenings at the institution as well as rewarding them with occasional perks.

• Add all volunteer parents to special mailing lists to receive institutional faculty/staff and alumni publications. Most campuses probably have a regular communication that all faculty and staff receive. Ask the editor to put your parent volunteers on the mailing list. Alumni publications will keep parents up-to-date on campus affairs and inform them about programs and services available to students after graduation; and they will enjoy reading success stories about the institution's graduates. Parents who understand the important role alumni play in the future of our universities and colleges will be a great help to our alumni missions.

• Whenever possible, offer volunteer parents complimentary tickets for parents events. You might be able to get the office sponsoring the event to give you the tickets at no charge. For example, the athletic office may provide you with football tickets or the theater department with tickets for a production. Be certain to let the parents know that the tickets were provided "compliments of" the department that donated them. You may be able to provide tickets for the volunteers' children as well, but most parents won't mind paying for their student's ticket if theirs are free.

• Public recognition goes a long way. Introduce parent board members at all events that parents attend—parents weekend, "Moms Days" and "Dads Days," recognition programs for students and parents, and so on. When a parent is selected for the advisory board, elected to an office, or honored by the institution, ask your campus PR office to send a press release to the newspaper in the parent's hometown community. Include a feature story and photo in the parents publication. Be certain this publication also announces new officers and advisory board members. Include a list of the advisory board members in all brochures describing the parents organization and any pro-

grams it sponsors. If your office can afford it, have parents association letterhead printed with the names and hometowns of advisory board members.

• Remember, these parents are volunteers, just like alumni and student volunteers. Thank them after they've completed a job, task, event, or program. In addition to formal letters from you and other parent services staff, don't forget to send handwritten notes on special occasions. Encourage your institution's president to thank parent volunteers after major campus events.

• Advisory board members will appreciate special programs and services just for them. If possible, have the president of the institution invite them to attend campus events as his or her guests. Plan a special reception for them at the president's home. Send parent volunteers a newsletter each semester that highlights events on campus. Provide opportunities for them to meet campus administrators at small special receptions, meetings, and so on. A gift when they leave the board is a special touch that is long remembered, especially if the gift has a special institutional significance—a paperweight with the university seal, for example.

How do you use parent volunteers?

While specific programs and activities a parents organization can sponsor are covered in detail in other chapters in this book, you'll certainly want to involve your parent volunteers in the following areas:

Parents day or weekend. Parents are a natural to help plan, implement, and evaluate an activity that invites parents to spend time on campus with students in their new environment. Who better to decide what parents would want to do on campus than the parents for whom this activity is being planned?

In addition to planning and evaluating the program, parent volunteers can stretch your staff during the event. Give parents hands-on jobs to do—working registration tables, handing out tickets, greeting parents, seating people at meals, serving as master of ceremonies, and so on. This not only makes your volunteers feel worthwhile, it helps give the parents organization visibility. Be sure your volunteers wear nametags that indicate they are members of the advisory board or parents organization.

Distributing funds. If your parents organization is involved in soliciting contributions from parents, it should have a hand in deciding how to distribute the funds raised.

When parents of ISU students contribute to the ISU Foundation, they can specify that their donation is to be used by the Parents' Association. Various campus departments and student organizations apply for funds to the Parents' Association. After reviewing these applications, the finance committee of the advisory board makes recommendations on which the board votes. The grants, usually about $500, have gone toward alcohol and drug awareness, career choice activities, financial aid brochures, and a handbook for ISU parents.

Raising funds. Parents can be effective fund raisers for your institution. A direct mail solicitation written and signed by the leaders of your parents association will probably return more dollars than a solicitation from the institution. Parent volunteers might also be willing to participate in telethons to other parents.

Career assistance. Remember that most of your parent volunteers are not "just" parents. They are business and professional people from a wide range of career fields. Many would be willing to assist students in making career choices by serving as panelists on career choice discussions or having a student spend a day with them on the job. Intern placements and employment situations may also arise from all the contacts these volunteers have in the world of work.

Recruitment. Parents can recruit students for your institution, either in their home communities or right on campus. Satisfied parents serve informally as recruiters when they express positive feelings about the institution. More formally, they can interview prospective students in their hometowns; host receptions for prospective students and parents; and attend college nights to answer questions from a parent's perspective. On campus, parents can participate in new student orientation programs or speak at open houses for high school students.

Parent of the year. The parents organization might initiate a parent of the year project on your campus. Once again, your parents advisory board should be involved in establishing criteria and selecting the winner. Ask for input from the committee on how to recognize the winning parent.

Scholarship programs. Parents can be actively involved in raising funds for scholarships through annual fund contributions or merchandise programs that market memorabilia to parents. Several campuses raise thousands of dollars by selling university watches to parents for commencement gifts. There are hundreds of options, and the parents should select what they feel would be most successful at your institution. Once the funds have been raised, the parents can determine guidelines for scholarship recipients and be involved in the selection process.

You can involve parent volunteers in the life of your institution by asking local parents to provide off-campus housing opportunities for students, to contact their local legislators to support higher education tax issues, to assist at athletic events, to sponsor refreshment breaks for parents during move-in and move-out days, to host students who are traveling for the institution, and to organize events for other parents in their communities.

Go for it!

The success of a parents program depends upon the visibility of your parent volunteers and the organization itself. Parents need to know whom to contact

when they need assistance and what is going on, both on campus and in the lives of their student. Take every opportunity to toot the horn of your group. Ask for a chance to talk about the organization to all parents attending new student orientation. Publications sent to parents should include feature stories on the organization and its volunteers.

You should develop a brochure for your parents organization that tells parents how they can join and the benefits they will receive. List the names, addresses, and phone numbers of parent volunteers. If your campus has a parents handbook, it should include as much information as possible on the parents organization.

You will enjoy working with this newfound group of energetic and enthusiastic volunteers. And the benefits you reap from your efforts will make the extra work rewarding. Parents are indeed an important constituent group that we cannot afford to overlook.

Illinois State University Parents' Association Constitution

I. Name: This nonprofit organization shall be known as the Illinois State University Parents' Association.

II. Purpose: The Parents' Association is designed:

A. To better inform parents of Illinois State University's program facilities, services, and needs.

B. To serve as a liaison between parents and the entire university community and to develop a good rapport among these constituent groups.

C. To support fund-raising efforts for needed university programs to supplement state appropriations. All gifts go to the ISU Foundation and may be designated for the Parents' Association.

D. To support student programs with financial grants to be given annually.

E. To encourage qualified students to attend ISU under the direction of the Admissions Office.

F. To help publicize and stimulate enthusiasm for ISU in local communities.

G. To support legislation for the growth and improvement of higher education in general and ISU specifically.

H. To invite parents to become better acquainted with ISU through campus and regional meetings.

III. Membership: Members shall be all parents of ISU students and parents of alumni who wish to be included in the membership. Those who contribute to the annual fund will be considered "active members" and will be given special recognition.

IV. Governance:

A. Advisory Board: The Parents' Association shall be governed by an Advisory Board made up of representatives of parent households chosen from geographic areas with large concentrations of student homes. These areas will be identified by the Office of Alumni and Parent Services.

B. Officers: The officers shall be a President, Vice President, Secretary, and the Director of Alumni and Parent Services (ex-officio). All elected officers shall hold office for one year or until successors have been elected and installed.

V. Meetings of the Board: The annual meeting will be held during the fall Parents' Weekend. The time of the spring meeting will be designated by the Board. Special meetings may be called at the discretion of the Board. All members are invited to all Advisory Board meetings.

VI. Campus Location: The Parents' Association will be housed in the Office of Alumni and Parent Services. The Director of Alumni and Parent Services, or a designated representative, will serve as the university coordinator for the Advisory Board and Association.

VII. Amendments: Amendments to the Constitution may be made at any meeting of the Association's Advisory Board. A two-thirds majority of those present will be required for adoption.

Illinois State University Parents' Association Bylaws

I. Qualifications of Membership: Any father, mother, or guardian of a student attending Illinois State University or parents of alumni who wish to be, are included as members of the ISU Parents' Association. Those who contribute to the annual fund will be identified as "active members" and will be given special recognition.

II. Advisory Board:

A. Representation: The Advisory Board of the ISU Parents' Association shall be composed of at least 15 but not more than 20 representatives of parent households chosen from geographic areas with large concentrations of student homes. These areas will be identified by the Office of Alumni and Parent Services.

B. Term of office: Advisory Board members may serve on the Board for two years following the graduation or termination of the education of their last enrolled son or daughter.

C. Advisory Board members may be removed from the Board after missing three consecutive Advisory Board meetings upon the recommendation of the Advisory Board Executive Committee.

D. Selection of Advisory Board members:

1. Interested parents will be asked to complete an information sheet and submit it to the Office of Alumni and Parent Services.
2. Potential members will be screened by the Office of Alumni and Parent Services and submitted to the Board for final approval.
3. All Advisory Board members will receive a letter of appointment to the Board by the President of the university.

III. Officers: The officers shall be a President, Vice President, and a Secretary. Each officer's position is filled by the family unit. One or the other shall preside or be spokesperson at a given meeting or event. Elections will take place at the spring meeting.

A. Qualifications: All elected officers shall have a student enrolled at Illinois State University during their term in office. In case of withdrawal of the student from the university during the term of office, completion of the term of office shall be at the discretion of the Advisory Board.

B. Term of office: All elected officers shall hold office for one year or until their successor has been elected and installed. The term of elected office shall be from July 1 until June 30 of the following year.

C. The President shall have served at least one term on the Advisory Board. This officer shall preside at all meetings of the Parents' Association Board and Executive Committee. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all standing committees. The Vice President shall assist the President and perform all duties of the President in his or her absence. The Secretary shall keep the records of the Parents' Association, be responsible for the minutes of all meetings, and handle all correspondence.

IV. Standing Committees: There shall be the following standing committees appointed by the Board President:

A. Executive Committee: All officers plus two other members chosen by the Board.

B. Nominating Committee: To nominate officers for each year. The Nominating Committee shall be made up of three representatives from the Board and chaired by the outgoing President. The committee shall present nominees for membership to the Advisory Board primarily at the spring meeting or at other Board meetings if needed.

C. Finance Committee: Five Board members shall serve as a committee to recommend recipients of Parents' Association funds. Funds will be distributed according to guidelines set up by the Parent Advisory Board.

V. **Quorum:** One-third of the family units of the Advisory Board shall constitute a quorum.

VI. **Amendments:** Amendments to these Bylaws may be made at any meeting of the Advisory Board. A simple majority of the Advisory Board members present and voting is needed for adoption.

Figure 14-1: Parents Association Advisory Board Application

ISU PARENTS ASSOCIATION
ADVISORY BOARD APPLICATION

DATE _____

PHONE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

COUNTY _____

Name(s) of ISU son/daughter	Expected graduation year(s)
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. Does your career/employment allow you to come to Normal for 2 board meetings per year? (One on Parents Weekend and one in the spring)

2. What do you see as the purpose of the Parents Association?

3. What suggestions do you have for improvement of the Parents Association?

4. Are you willing to attend a high school college night in your area?

Advisory Board members may serve on the Board for two years following the graduation or termination of the education of their last enrolled son or daughter.

Chapter 15

Ask and Ye Shall Receive

Thomas A. McNamee
Director of Development
Hartwick College

Four years ago, Hartwick College's president, Philip S. Wilder, Jr., introduced me to a group of parent leaders who had gathered at his home for a breakfast meeting during Parents Weekend.

"Were it not for the strong and sustained support of our 'surrogate alumni'—the parents of current and former students—Hartwick College would not be in the solid financial position it is today," he announced.

Since then, I've seen firsthand just how important these surrogate alumni can be to a small college where half the 8,000 graduates are still under age 34. Small or young institutions, with their limited alumni giving potential, can't afford to ignore any source of support. But support doesn't just mean money.

A substantial parents fund was already in place at Hartwick when I joined the development staff. Parents had given more than $90,000 that year—accounting for nearly 15 percent of all contributions to the annual fund. My predecessor had done an excellent job of developing the parents fund to supplement alumni donations. My challenge was to find new ways to expand on that base.

Seeking ways to improve upon Hartwick's already successful program, I recalled the advice of an earlier mentor. Berkshire Community College President Thomas E. O'Connell once told me, "If it works, leave it alone. If it doesn't work, wait. Change can bring with it problems that you never thought of."

So I waited a year, studied the fund, and saw a 15 percent increase in dollars and a 10 percent rise in donors. Only then did I begin to draft plans--not to improve the parents fund itself but to enlarge the scope of parent activities at Hartwick.

Seek and ye shall find

We began with two major steps:

1. The Parent Council. We borrowed this idea from Amherst College. We expanded our Parent Executive Committee, which was essentially a fund-raising group, into a Parent Council with three committees: admissions and careers, communications, and parents fund. Later, we dropped communications and created a separate committee for internships and careers, leaving admissions by itself.

2. The parent resource questionnaire. We created a questionnaire to help us identify parents interested in working on the Parent Council committees or in other areas. Here I borrowed from Amherst, Hamilton, and Carleton Colleges. The resulting survey has proven an excellent method for annually gathering data about parents.

Happily, neither of these two changes brought any serious problems. Indeed, management time has been minimal (thanks to cooperation from other departments), the parents fund has continued to grow, and Hartwick has developed new resources in at least five areas.

Knock and it shall be opened

Our survey is a large sheet folded to form four pages and folded again to create a self-mailer (see Figure 15-1 at end of chapter). Respondents reverse the fold to turn the form into a postage-paid return mailer.

At first we mailed the survey to parents of all current students. Now we hand it to all parents who attend summer orientation with their children and provide a box to collect completed questionnaires. At present, our files hold completed surveys from 274 of a possible 1,400 families. That doesn't include surveys that we removed when the respondents' son or daughter left Hartwick.

Like most surveys, ours asks for basic personal and professional information. Recognizing the number of families in which both parents work, and knowing that women head many single-parent families, we ask both mothers and fathers for personal and employment information.

Questions cover professional fields and other areas of expertise, titles and responsibilities, business addresses and phone numbers, and college classes and degrees. In addition, respondents indicate whether they prefer being contacted by phone or mail, at home or at work.

We struck a responsive chord with our awareness that mothers might be professionals and might also wish to assist Hartwick. One wrote, "Thank you for giving mothers equal space!"

Our only mistake in this section of the survey was failing to allow space for fathers and mothers to indicate individually how they wished to be contacted.

Simply providing two sets of boxes to check would have prevented some unnecessary confusion. So much for perfection!

By skills ye shall know them

We divided the rest of the survey into sections corresponding to the areas of parent activity we hoped to create or expand: admissions, careers, internships, visiting committees, speakers, and (of course) fund raising.

• **Admissions:** Although enrollment was stable at 1,400 in the fall of 1982 (and has remained so to date), Hartwick's admissions staff wanted to explore new ways of reaching prospective students. Informal conversations with freshmen that year indicated that as college costs rose, parents were playing an ever-more-important role in college choice. Consequently, the admissions office asked us to include a section on admissions in the survey.

We asked parents if they would be willing to answer questions from parents of newly accepted students. Nearly every respondent answered "yes." We ended up printing a "Parent Directory" to be given to the parents of accepted students. Organized by state with parents' names, addresses, phone numbers, and the names and class years of their children, this booklet has been useful in Hartwick's admissions process. It also produced an unexpected benefit for parents of current students: The listing offers an ideal source for arranging carpools to campus.

In another question we asked parents if they were willing to host, in their homes, informal social gatherings for new students and parents. Respondents could specify interest in hosting only a couple of people, three to 15, 15 to 30, or more. More than a few parents indicated they could accommodate 30 or more guests at their homes, and one even offered the use of his winery in the Hudson River Valley for a reception! So far, parents have helped with major gatherings and post-acceptance parties at rented sites. We are now working on a videocassette about Hartwick for hosts to show in their homes.

• **Careers and internships:** At least half the parents responding indicated an interest in helping with careers and internships. Parents, obviously concerned about the job outlook for their own children, were quick to volunteer for a network of career advisers, sponsor interns, and help locate summer and full-time work opportunities.

In addition, many parents said they were willing to let students accompany them during their daily work routines. Others indicated that they were able to provide housing for out-of-town interns.

The Career Planning and Placement Center stores these data in a computer for easy access. In addition to its uses in career and internship placement, the information helps staff to identify participants for Career Awareness Week and to organize seminars on topics ranging from entrepreneurism to small business

management. For example, the center recently presented a symposium featuring as panelists parents who make their livings as corporate "head hunters."

• **Visiting committees:** Hartwick is considering setting up visiting committees to assess the quality and applicability of course offerings. By identifying professionals with expertise in various areas, the survey creates a pool of candidates for interested academic departments.

We were surprised to discover, for example, that our parent population includes more than a dozen top executives of chemical firms. The chemistry department is beginning to find this resource a help, not only in forming visiting committees, but in arranging internship and career placement for students and even in seeking corporate assistance for departmental projects.

• **Speakers' bureau:** Department chairs and faculty are also finding that parents make valuable lecturers. For example, two parents have spoken to students on their experiences in the Orient. One is a senior editor of *Fortune* who recently returned to China after many years. Another is an executive at Merrill Lynch who had just toured the Far East for the first time.

• **Fund raising:** Not wishing to miss an opportunity, the development office added two survey questions about fund raising. The first asked if the parents would be willing to help solicit gifts from five to 10 other parents for the annual fund. Each year we've distributed the survey, we've found several individuals who *enjoy* asking for money.

In fact, those parents who volunteer for this activity have turned out to be aggressive fund raisers. Last year, 12 members of the Parent Council made 116 calls and raised $28,342. That accounted for 21 percent of the total for the parents fund.

Some of these parents take their involvement so seriously they do more than just solicit gifts. Consider, for example, one of our most enthusiastic parent fund raisers: Stanford Phelps, who co-chairs the Parent Council with his wife, Betsy. As chair of the parents fund last year, Phelps took his job so seriously that he wrote scripts for parent solicitors and student phonathon volunteers to use when making calls. He came to campus to teach students sales techniques before the phonathon and offered a prize of $1,000 to the top team of callers and another $200 to the best overall student fund raiser.

Phelps' involvement didn't stop with fund raising. One student so impressed him during the phonathon that he offered her a job as his assistant at Prudential Bache on Wall Street, where he is a vice president. And, in a roundtable discussion on management, he told students about his career as an investor.

The second fund-raising question on the survey asked if parents would be willing to introduce Hartwick representatives to organizations or foundations that might be interested in the college. So far we have had several leads but no results.

Freely ye receive, freely give

Responses to the questionnaire have helped us clearly identify members for the reorganized Parent Council. We know their areas of special interest; that

makes committee assignments easier. And, to best use all this information, we open our files to anyone at the college who has legitimate use for them—professors seeking parents involved in their fields, for example.

Moreover, the admissions, careers, and internship offices have taken on responsibility for their respective committees as well as for follow-up with other interested parents. The cooperation of these individuals has been important in making the program work so smoothly.

As we finish our third year of operation, we're still discovering and exploring new uses of parents as a resource. But one interim assessment of our system has given us cause to pause and glow. It came from a parent who happens to be the director of development at a nearby college. In the comments section of the survey she wrote, "This is a good concept—so good I will steal it!"

Reprinted from CURRENTS, *June 1985.*

Figure 15-1: Hartwick Parent Resource Questionnaire

Hartwick Parent Resource Questionnaire

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION (Type or black ink only)

Parents of _____ Class of _____

Father _____	Mother _____
Address _____	Address _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Phone (___) _____ Zip _____	Phone (___) _____ Zip _____

II. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Father	**Mother**
Professional Field _____	Professional Field _____
_____	_____
Business Name/Address _____	Business Name/Address _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Phone (___) _____ Zip _____	Phone (___) _____ Zip _____
Title _____	Title _____
_____	_____
Responsibilities _____	Responsibilities _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
College(s) and Class(es) _____	College(s) and Class(es) _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Major(s) _____	Major(s) _____
Graduate Degree(s) _____	Graduate Degree(s) _____
_____	_____
Professional Expertise _____	Professional Expertise _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Contact Options: (please check one or more)

☐ home by mail	☐ home by mail
☐ home by phone	☐ home by phone
☐ business by mail	☐ business by mail
☐ business by phone	☐ business by phone

III. ADMISSIONS

The Admissions Office would like to identify parents of current students who would be willing to help Hartwick in its efforts to inform prospective students and their parents about the College.

Please check below if you would be willing to:

Father	Mother	
☐	☐	Be included in the Parent Directory, a listing of parents of current Hartwick students who are willing to be contacted by prospective students and their parents.
☐	☐	Host an informational and/or congratulatory open house in your home for prospective students and their parents.
☐	☐	Attend receptions and open houses for prospective students and their parents which take place in your local area.
☐	☐	Take part in the Admissions Office parent-to-parent telemarketing effort.

IV. CAREERS

The goals of the Career Planning Center are to assist students in gathering information about careers, and in locating job opportunities. To help achieve these goals, a network of parents and alumni called "The Hartwick Link" has been formed.

Please check below if you would be willing to:

Father	Mother	
☐	☐	Participate in the Job Referral Program by forwarding information on entry-level or summer employment opportunities.
☐	☐	Come to College to speak to a group or to a class about your area of expertise.
☐	☐	Talk to students/alumni by phone or in a personal interview regarding your career.

V. INTERNSHIPS

Internships provide students with opportunities to relate their liberal arts studies to specific career fields, to test skills and interests and to apply theory to practical work settings. Internships can be undertaken in any professional field during any academic term including summer and the one-month January term. Student interns can be paid or unpaid (decided by the sponsoring organization) and they receive credit for the internship.

The sponsor of a student intern provides the work setting, a supervisor to advise and oversee the student in his or her work, and a written evaluation of the student at the conclusion of the internship.

Please check below if you would be willing to:

Father	Mother	
☐	☐	Sponsor a student intern.
☐	☐	Suggest other persons, agencies or organizations who might sponsor a student intern. (Please use reverse side for comments.)
☐	☐	Provide housing for an out-of-town student interning near your home.

VI. FUND RAISING

Father	Mother	
☐	☐	I/we would be willing to help solicit gifts from 5–10 other parents for the Annual Fund.
☐	☐	I/we would be willing to introduce college representatives to corporate and/or foundation officials who may have an interest in supporting Hartwick.

VII. COMMENTS _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 16

Parents as Partners in Student Recruitment

Christine K. Wilkinson
Acting Vice President for Student Affairs
Arizona State University

Why should you use parents in student recruitment? With increased pressures, short staff, and limited budgets, you frequently need to call upon volunteers to help fill the gaps. What better group than parents? Usually those parents who volunteer to help have already demonstrated a strong commitment to your institution and quickly become enthusiastic spokespersons for its strengths and its values. After all, they have often been PTA members, Little League coaches, and teacher aids, so they are ready to extend that commitment and support through the college years.

You can form a parent organization for student recruitment as a new group with its own unique identity or as a subset of a larger existing parent group. Its purpose can parallel other valuable recruitment groups, but with the added dimension of having individuals who have firsthand knowledge of current students and their concerns.

How can you identify potential parent volunteers?

While a mass mailing to all parents of students enrolled at your institution may appear to be the easier way to recruit volunteers, it's often wiser to be more selective, especially at the beginning stages of your program. You may want to consider recruiting your volunteers from the following groups of parents who are:

- alumni;
- local community leaders;
- faculty or staff members of your institution;
- related to your student leaders or outstanding scholars;
- former participants in your parents programs during new student orientation; and
- referred from your parents association.

You should also strive for diversity among your parent volunteers in the following areas:

- geographic region;
- class of son or daughter (your volunteers should not all be parents of seniors or parents of freshmen but should represent each of the four years);
- ethnic groups; and
- other special identifiers for your particular institution (e.g., religion, profession, military).

When you invite likely prospects to become volunteers, your invitation should include:

- why you are asking them;
- goals of the parent volunteer group;
- amount of time involved; and
- length of commitment you are asking for.

You should also enclose a parent volunteer response form (Figure 16-1 at end of chapter) on which the prospects can list the nearby high schools and colleges and check off those activities in which they are willing to participate.

When you receive the volunteer response forms, you should follow up immediately:

1. Send a letter to confirm participation and to express appreciation of the volunteers' support of the larger recruitment effort. Be sure to include the name and phone number of the admissions office staff contact so the volunteers can easily request additional materials and information and give general referrals.

2. Place the volunteers' names on various mailing lists of institutional programs and services so that they can become better aware of current activities and keep up-to-date on institutional affairs.

3. With the confirmation letter, send a list of other parent representatives to help the new volunteers become acquainted with parents already involved in the program. New volunteers often find it reassuring to know others are involved in their local area.

4. Ask an active volunteer to call and congratulate the new volunteer and offer assistance when needed.

5. A resource/training manual should be sent at the next regular update.

How should parent volunteers be involved?

As the volunteer group begins, involve the volunteers in already established activities. Once those are well under way, you can encourage unique approaches that may benefit your institution in other productive ways.

Parent volunteers can participate in all phases of recruitment and admissions. Recruitment activities could include:

- contacting high schools in their area to learn about college fairs;
- referring names of local high schools and community colleges in their area to admissions staff, as well as the name of the primary contact for visiting college representatives;
- representing your institution at college fairs;
- hosting receptions for prospects in the local area during visits of college representatives;
- referring good student prospects to the admissions office; and
- speaking to parent booster groups.

Once students have applied and been accepted, parent volunteers could:

- call local students to congratulate them on being accepted and to encourage them to enroll;
- call parents of admitted students to offer assistance and advice as needed and to tell them about the parents association;
- host yield receptions or parties (designed to connect admitted students to enrolled students); and
- match accepted students with alumni or continuing students in the area.

Parent volunteers help improve retention rates when they:

- participate in new student orientation panels giving the parent perspective; and
- serve as an ongoing contact person for other parents with problems or concerns during the year.

The role of staff

Staff support to the parent volunteer group is a key element in its success. Parent volunteer groups are the most mercurial and difficult of volunteer groups to manage. The primary and lifelong emotional commitment of parents is to their children. This commitment intensifies and in some cases dominates their reactions toward you, your volunteers, and your institution.

The staff member who is responsible for this program should be a person who is sensitive and mature enough to counsel and support both parent and student without betraying either. Realize that this person may be expected by some volunteers to impose their parental value system and demands on their children. The staff member must be able to assist the parents without becoming an extension of them. Your staff person must also constantly restate the group's

parameters and limits to preclude parents from going beyond the specific role of the recruitment group. Unless parents are reminded of the limits of this group, they may decide to take it upon themselves to overhaul your institution's academic advisement program, solve the common parking problems, or demand that your president take action on new residence hall plumbing—now!

This staff member will also serve as the key contact for communicating with the volunteers and training new recruits to the group. He or she will keep the volunteers apprised of changing needs of the admissions office and provide general staff support for the group. The latter may be time-consuming and costly, but must be planned for and accepted as a cost for the benefits of this program.

What sort of training do recruitment volunteers need?

A resource/training manual is paramount for parent volunteers. At a minimum, it should include:

1. purposes and guidelines (including the limits of authority) of the parent recruitment group;
2. location of the group and where it reports within your campus administrative structure;
3. a list of the current parent volunteers;
4. benefits of the program for the institution as well as for the volunteer (such as receiving newsletters and other ongoing communication from the institution, invitations to special campus events, recognition in parent publications);
5. college catalog "quick reference" page (a one-page list of key information found in the catalog and the pages on which each item is found);
6. admission requirements, preferably displayed in an easily read and clear matrix;
7. college facts: a separate page for each major, department, or college (the text should highlight specific facts and key contacts without getting bogged down in detail);
8. student profile: a listing of short but interesting facts about your student body, e.g., male/female ratio, geographical origin of students, popular majors, academic profiles, etc.;
9. general information, including:

- financial aid overview: a very simple explanation of the various types of financial aid, the basic forms used, and the timeline for application and processing;
- residential life: availability of on- and off-campus housing, how and when to apply, basic costs;
- athletics: sports offered at the intercollegiate and/or intramural level, names of coaches and their phone numbers; and

• special qualities that make your institution unique;

10. activity fact sheets: an information sheet for each activity in which parent volunteers are involved, e.g., "What is a college fair and what is my role?" Fact sheets for each activity describe the extent of volunteer involvement and what information and materials are needed;

11. a list of the 10 or 15 questions most frequently asked by prospective students and parents and the kinds of answers you would like them to give; and

12. a list of all the current parent volunteers.

Keep the format of the manual as simple as possible for ease of reading and referral. Remember, the volunteers do not need to know *everything* a staff member is expected to know.

In addition to the manual, you can provide on- or off-campus training sessions for your parent volunteers. When your admissions representatives visit an area in which parent volunteers live, they could provide a short training program. This would probably be a one- or two-hour evening program and include a campus update, review of basic admission and financial aid standards and processing, summary of parent activities, recruitment needs in the local area, and a question-and-answer session.

You could also provide an extensive training program at your institution. To make it more convenient for parent volunteers, you might hold a session during parents weekend when they will be on campus to visit their students. The context can be similar to off-campus training, but may also include tours of new facilities. The program should include more campus administrators and faculty talking about new, revised, or expanded programs. Social events for reward and recognition are also important.

How should you communicate with parent volunteers?

Ongoing communication is critical for people who are not part of the daily operation of the institution. Further, providing parent volunteers with regular contacts with the institution enlarges their perspective, which might otherwise be primarily derived from that of their student (whether good or bad). A newsletter (very informal and conversational) is a good approach. Putting your parent volunteers on the institution's mailing lists also provides good resource material for them at no cost to your budget. In this case, your newsletter can simply supplement the other types of information.

How much will it cost?

Volunteer programs are not without cost. The admissions office should budget for the parent volunteer program just as it does for other programs. The basic costs would include the following:

• **Publications:** You will need a resource/training manual, newsletter, program updates, and so on.

• **Program materials:** The admissions office must order enough materials to supply the expanded recruitment network resulting from the efforts of your parent volunteers. For example, if the volunteers will represent your institution at six college fairs the admissions office would not normally attend, you will need additional supplies and recruitment publications for prospects at these new schools.

• **Training sessions:** If you schedule a training program, you need to budget for materials, meals, lodging, and travel expenses for the staff member (if the program is off-campus) or for the parent volunteers (if it's on campus).

• **Mailing costs:** Planning well in advance will help you reduce the cost of large mailings. Sending your materials far enough ahead of time allows you to mail them at the least expensive rate.

• **Recognition items:** Make sure parent volunteers receive college identity items to use while they are representing you. These could be lapel pins, nametags, and/or college shirts, t-shirts, or sweatshirts—depending on what you can afford. Also include in your budget service recognition awards; volunteers always appreciate certificates, plaques, paperweights, or other mementos. Inscribe the name of the volunteer along with the name of the parent volunteer group and, of course, your institutional insignia. (A footnote related to funding these added expenses: Parents who become involved with recruitment are often moved to contribute money to your institution.)

Lastly, whether you supervise the volunteer group yourself or assign this responsibility to a staff member, be sure that you make a solid commitment to the program by allotting enough time to it. Whoever deals with the volunteers will probably also have many other recruitment responsibilities. If this program slips to the bottom of the list of priorities, both you and your volunteers will soon become discouraged. And, while some programs may merely disappear from neglect, a motivated group of parents may create a major public relations problem for you, your office, or your institution.

Program evaluation is always important. For each event in which parent volunteers represent the institution, ask them to fill out an evaluation form (see Figure 16-2). Further, once you have established a parent volunteer program, you should develop a form for the participants to complete annually. This will help you determine if they would like to continue in their role, if they need more institutional support, and if there are other activities they would like to sponsor in their area.

Be cautious about evaluating the success of the efforts of your volunteers. You may find it difficult to quantify the results in a meaningful way. That is, you may find it hard to prove that applications have risen 30 percent because parents are assisting in recruitment, or that drop-out rates are declining because parents participate in student orientation and assist parents of freshmen when they have problems.

Do, however, keep statistics and track successes as you would for any of your other recruitment programs. Also, citations of hours contributed annually or contacts made can offer persuasive arguments and support for program continuance and expansion.

If your volunteers are eager and enthusiastic and remain so after they have served your institution for a year or more, you know that they are seeking out and encouraging prospective students, they are reassuring parents of applying or accepted students, they are enhancing the image of your institution at high schools and college fairs and wherever they happen to be. And as they do these good things for your institution, you can also assume that they are reinforcing their own positive feelings toward the institution.

How should you reward parent volunteers?

Parent volunteers need both informal and formal recognition and reward. First, let them know that their efforts are important to the institution by giving them timely feedback and follow-up reports about referrals they make and programs they attend. This tells them that what they do counts, and that they are significant links in the institution's recruitment network.

When you give your volunteers formal recognition, acknowledge their years of service as well as how much they have done. From certificates of appreciation to institutional memorabilia, mementos are always welcome. Other forms of recognition and special treatment could include:

- publishing their names in the parents association newsletter or other appropriate institutional publication;
- providing assistance related to their student—counseling, "cutting red tape," help from you as a central campus reference point;
- offering perks (e.g., invitations to luncheons, meeting with the president at receptions, discounts for cultural or athletic events);
- asking for their input; for example, solicit their advice about continuing a program or starting a new one, what type of activities work best in their region, and what kinds of recognition would be most appreciated by parent volunteers.

Conclusion

While a parent volunteer group may be more demanding than others, it will also bring powerful commitment, limitless enthusiasm, extensive geographical outreach, and significant fiscal resources to your student recruitment efforts. The staff time and resources you invest in the program can bring numerous rewards in your application and enrollment numbers. If the parents of prospective students have a major influence in college choice and financing, who

better to convince them of the values of attending your college than the enthusiastic, informed, and proud parents of your own satisfied students?

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Figure 16-1: Parent Volunteer Response Form

*****Sample*****

(INSTITUTION NAME)
PARENT VOLUNTEER RESPONSE FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____ Home Phone: (___) _____

_____ Work Phone: (___) _____

After reviewing information about the Parent Advocate Program, I am most interested in participating in the following (Please check all that apply):

___ 1. Representing (list school name) at college nights in my local area.

___ 2. Participating in parent orientation programs.

___ 3. Contacting students by phone in my local vicinity.

___ 4. Hosting an informal picnic/barbecue for prospective students in my area.

___ 5. Referring names of outstanding students to the Admissions Office.

___ 6. (Other items as determined by your institution)

Should a Training Seminar be scheduled in my area,

___ I would like to participate in the seminar.
The following days and times would be best for me:

___ Weekday Mornings ___ Weekend Mornings

___ Weekday Afternoons ___ Weekend Afternoons

___ Weekday Evenings ___ Weekend Evenings

To help the Admissions Office contact high schools and community colleges in your area, please list those schools that are within 30 minutes of your home.

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____

THANK YOU FOR ASSISTING WITH (your institution's name) RECRUITMENT EFFORT

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Figure 16-2: College Fair Evaluation Form

Arizona State University
College Fair Evaluation Form

College Fair: _____ City: _____

Date of Fair: __/__/__ Number of Students Contacted: [ ]

ASU Representative(s): _____

1. How many boxes of materials were sent to you? _____
   The amount of information was:

   _____ too little _____ about right _____ too much

2. Which two brochures/pamphlets did you distribute most frequently?

   _____

3. What type of material did not seem to move at the college fair?

   _____

4. What other types of materials were needed (that we did not send)?

   _____

5. How many students were interested in the following colleges:

Architecture:	_____	Liberal Arts:	_____
Business:	_____	Nursing:	_____
Education:	_____	Public Programs:	_____
Engineering:	_____	Social Work:	_____
Fine Arts:	_____	Honors College:	_____

6. Rate the following types of questions on a scale of 1 to 5:
   (1 = least frequently asked; 5 = most frequently asked)

Activities:	_____	CLEP/AP Programs:	_____
Admissions requirements and procedures:	_____	Financial Aid:	_____
Athletics:	_____	Housing:	_____
Colleges/Programs:	_____	_____ (other):	_____
Costs of attending ASU:	_____		

7. Circle the areas in questions 5 and 6 which you would like more information about.

(over)

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8. How many students were of the following ethnic backgrounds:

   Asian: ____ Causasian: _____ Native American: _____

   Black: ____ Hispanic: _____

9. Were you contacted by the high school prior to the fair? _____

10. Did the high school send you materials prior to the fair? _____

    If so, what? _____

    _____

11. What general feelings did you get from the counselors about ASU?

    _____

    _____

    _____

12. What suggestions do you think would make the program run better?

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

    _____

13. What type of follow-up would you like the School Relations Office to do for the students you talked to?

    _____

    _____

    _____

5/15/89 mab

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Chapter 17

Using Parents in Career Assistance Programs

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Staff Associate
Council for Advancement and Support of Education

"Will my student be able to find a job after college?" This is one of the questions most frequently asked by parents. As we know all too well, no institution can guarantee employment success for its students, but there are several ways to help parents feel more comfortable about and become involved in whatever their student plans to do after graduation, whether it be to find a job or to pursue a higher degree.

Parents need constant reassurance that they can expect positive results from the emotional support and the money they have invested in their student and in his or her years at your institution. They rightfully see these years as a step in the student's preparation for the business of life—a career. Parents worry that the student's successes during the undergraduate years—whether they involve triumphs on the playing field, editorship of the college literary magazine, or A+ papers on the Postimpressionists—will mean nothing in "the real world."

You can play a key role in helping to inform parents and to involve them in career assistance programs that will help ensure that their student is "on the right track." This in turn will strengthen their relationship with your institution.

These efforts to communicate with parents about career assistance programs and to involve them need not dominate or deplete your resources. In fact, the most effective efforts can be tied into existing programs or projects or can be developed with relatively few resources. You'll need to have a creative mind and access to a few pieces of information to do the job.

Before you begin, ask yourself these two questions: "Can I devote some staff time to this effort?" and "Do I have the support behind me to do the task?"

If your answer is "yes," your program will probably be very successful. Just keep in mind that you can accomplish a lot by piggy-backing efforts onto existing programs and taking advantage of information that currently exists. You don't need to reinvent the wheel to produce results.

Communication is the first step

Now that you've determined that you have the time and the support to put some effort into involving parents in career assistance programs, where do you begin? Communicating with parents about your institution's career office is your first step. If you already produce a parents handbook, newsletter, brochure, or other publication, make sure you include information about the career office. Let parents know where the career office is located, how they can reach it, and whom they should contact to ask questions.

In addition, tell them about the services that are available to the student and how students can learn about and use the career office. Does the career office offer:

- career workshops;
- seminars on interviewing techniques;
- a resume-writing workshop or publication;
- internship or externship programs;
- vocational testing;
- fellowships;
- summer job placement; and
- information on graduate school programs and admissions?

In your publication you should highlight the programs offered by your career office. The more parents know about the career office and its services, the more confident they will be about your institution's ability to assist their student.

Some institutions dedicate a few pages in their parents handbook to answering parents' questions on career assistance, or you may want to develop a special information sheet, brochure, or letter for parents. Your career office already has the information you need to do this. Adapting it for parents will not be a difficult task. Parents want to know:

- the employment success of different majors;
- what percentage of your institution's graduates find employment;
- the internship/externship opportunities that are available;
- how a student finds a summer job;
- what a student has to do to begin the interviewing process; and so on.

Developing a good relationship with your career office is key to your success in informing and involving parents. If you do not have a contact in the career

office, get one now. The sooner you formulate a healthy working relationship, the better off you will be in all of your programs, not just your parents programs.

If you haven't already done so, you need to educate yourself on how your career office works. This will help you answer parents' questions and identify career issues and concerns. You don't need to know every detail, but the more you talk to parents and learn about your institution's career office, the easier it will be to develop and adapt your programming to meet specific needs.

If your institution has extremely limited resources, you may not be able to do anything but inform parents about the career office and its services. Whatever your situation, it is very important to do this *even if it is all you can do.* Informing parents about this very important part of your institution is an easy way to help foster support.

Involving parents

Once you've informed parents about your institution's career office, you're ready to take the next step: involving them in specific career assistance programs. During your efforts to involve parents, you must also continue to provide information to them. While not all parents want to become actively involved in your institution and its programs, a career assistance program offers them the opportunity to participate in their student's college experience by sharing their own expertise.

Career assistance programs

You can add a career assistance aspect to your institution's parents day or parents weekend by asking parents to serve as mentors during this event. When parents send in their registration for the weekend or day, you can use surveys or response cards to ask them if they'd be willing to spend an hour or two during the event to talk to interested students about their career. Students then sign up to meet with the parent volunteers in their field of interest. Parents use the opportunity to share their expertise, and students get helpful information on their chosen field.

Career assistance programs can also help parents understand more about the field their student has chosen. A student panel during parent days or weekends is a good way to inform parents. You may wish to include faculty members, alumni, and parents on this panel, as well as students. Hearing from other students—and their parents and teachers—in that major or department can reassure parents that the career their student has chosen does have a future.

This is particularly useful if your institution has a large number of students in one major or department.

Student panels are also a good way to inform parents about the on-campus resources that are available to their student, especially career services. Students who serve on the panel share their experiences in using the career office resources. For example, one student describes an internship or externship program she participated in; another, how he found a summer job through the career office; a third talks about the interviewing process or the resume-writing workshop.

If you have a parent council or committee, you may want to ask the members to coordinate or sponsor specific career assistance programs or events. One project that is especially useful for parents of seniors is the development of a job bank. The parent committee prepares a survey to send to all parents (or a selected subgroup of parents) that requests information on possible employment opportunities. This survey could also be inserted in an already existing parent publication (newsletter, handbook, or brochure).

The survey could include the following questions:

- Does your employer or organization hire summer help?
- What full-time and part-time employment opportunities are available at your company now?
- Does your employer have internship opportunities?
- Would you be interested in sponsoring a student externship? (A shortened version of an internship, an externship involves one to three days of hands-on experience in an employment setting.)

The information gathered by this survey enables the career office to match students to employment opportunities.

You need not limit this program to seniors. You may wish to concentrate on one particular area to assist all students (summer jobs, internships, or externships, for example).

Not all career assistance programs have to be on campus. If your institution has an alumni club network, you have a perfect opportunity to involve parents in regional career assistance events. Local parents can provide orientation for recent graduates in a particular city or metropolitan area. If a large percentage of your institution's graduates move to a certain area, you may want to coordinate a program sponsored by local parents and alumni in which the new alumni receive help in adjusting, advice on existing employment opportunities, and tips on employment strategies most likely to be successful in that area.

Asking parents and alumni to serve as career advisors and mentors at regional events is another easy way to involve parents at the local level.

If your parent volunteers are interested in one particular career issue—helping students find summer employment in a nearby metropolitan area, for example—you may wish to develop a program to meet that local need. Parents could survey local employers to identify summer job opportunities and then

make the information available through the career office or match students to particular jobs.

Career advising via the telephone is another way to match parent expertise and student needs. Parent volunteers could talk to students interested in a particular field. You might assign parents to contact a certain number of students majoring in that field. Or you could hold a career hotline. Parents would be available for one evening to answer career questions and give advice to students.

These are just a few ideas to consider as you think about ways you can cultivate support for your institution by involving parents in career assistance programs. Your institution's resources and current programs will determine just how much you are able to do in this area. But whatever you do, communicating with parents is essential. If parents are informed and feel that they are contributing to the success of their student, they will become part of your institution's most loyal and active constituency.

Chapter 18

101 Ways to Give Recognition to Volunteers

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Continously, but always inconclusively, the subject of recognition is discussed by directors and coordinators of volunteer programs. There is great agreement as to its importance but great diversity in its implementation.

Listed below are 101 possibilities gathered from hither and yon. The duplication at 1 and 101 is for emphasis. The blank at 102 is for the beginning of your own list.

I think it is important to remember that recognition is not so much something you do as it is something you are. It is a sensitivity to others as persons, not a strategy for discharging obligations.

1. Smile.
2. Put up a volunteer suggestion box.
3. Treat to a soda.
4. Reimburse assignment-related expenses.
5. Ask for a report.
6. Send a birthday card.
7. Arrange for discounts.
8. Give service stripes.
9. Maintain a coffee bar.
10. Plan annual ceremonial occasions.
11. Invite to staff meeting.
12. Recognize personal needs and problems.

13. Accommodate personal needs and problems.
14. Be pleasant.
15. Use in an emergency situation.
16. Provide a baby-sitter.
17. Post Honor Roll in reception area.
18. Respect their wishes.
19. Give informal teas.
20. Keep challenging them.
21. Send a Thanksgiving Day card to the volunteer's family.
22. Provide a nursery.
23. Say "Good morning."
24. Greet by name.
25. Provide good preservice training.
26. Help develop self-confidence.
27. Award plaques to sponsoring group.
28. Take time to explain fully.
29. Be verbal.
30. Motivate agency VIPs to converse with volunteers.
31. Hold rap sessions.
32. Give additional responsibility.
33. Afford participation in team planning.
34. Respect sensitivities.
35. Enable to grow on the job.
36. Enable to grow out of the job.
37. Send newsworthy information to the media.
38. Have wine and cheese tasting parties.
39. Ask client-patient to evaluate their work-service.
40. Say "Good afternoon."
41. Honor their preferences.
42. Create pleasant surroundings.
43. Welcome to staff coffee breaks.
44. Enlist to train other volunteers.
45. Have a public reception.
46. Take time to talk.
47. Defend against hostile or negative staff.
48. Make good plans.
49. Commend to supervisory staff.
50. Send a valentine.
51. Make thorough pre-arrangements.
52. Persuade "personnel" to equate volunteer experience with work experience and respect it accordingly.
53. Admit to partnership with paid staff.
54. Recommend to prospective employer.
55. Provide scholarships to volunteer conferences or workshops.

56. Offer advocacy roles.
57. Utilize as consultants.
58. Write them thank-you notes.
59. Invite participation in policy formulation.
60. Surprise with coffee and cake.
61. Celebrate outstanding projects and achievements.
62. Nominate for volunteer awards.
63. Have a "Presidents Day" for new presidents of sponsoring groups.
64. Carefully match volunteer with job.
65. Praise them to their friends.
66. Provide substantive in-service training.
67. Provide useful tools in good working condition.
68. Say "Good night."
69. Plan staff and volunteer social events.
70. Be a *real* person.
71. Rent billboard space for public laudation.
72. Accept their individuality.
73. Provide opportunities for conferences and evaluation.
74. Identify age groups.
75. Maintain meaningful file.
76. Send impromptu fun cards.
77. Plan occasional extravaganzas.
78. Instigate client-planned surprises.
79. Utilize purchased newspaper space.
80. Promote a "Volunteer-of-the-Month" program.
81. Send letter of appreciation to employer.
82. Plan a "Recognition Edition" of the agency newsletter.
83. Color-code nametags to indicate particular achievements (hours, years, unit, etc.).
84. Send commendatory letters to prominent public figures.
85. Say "We missed you."
86. Praise the sponsoring group or club.
87. Promote staff smiles.
88. Facilitate personal maturation.
89. Distinguish between groups and individuals in the group.
90. Maintain safe working conditions.
91. Adequately orientate.
92. Award special citations for extraordinary achievements.
93. Fully indoctrinate regarding the agency.
94. Send Christmas cards.
95. Be familiar with the details of assignments.
96. Conduct community-wide cooperative, inter-agency recognition events.
97. Plan a theater party.
98. Attend a sports event.

99. Have a picnic.
100. Say "Thank you."
101. Smile.

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Section 5

Raising Funds from Parents

Chapter 19

Using Parents in the Institution's Fund-raising Efforts

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As colleges and universities seek new ways to increase gift income, many are beginning to look at the fund-raising potential of parents, a constituency often neglected by administrators who say, "How can you approach parents for gifts when they are already paying $10,000 or more for tuition?" The truth is, as our counterparts in independent schools have long understood, these bill-paying parents are often an institution's most loyal supporters.

Both Hartwick College, a small, private, liberal arts college in upstate New York, and the University of Vermont, a publicly supported institution of nearly 8,000 students in northern New England, operate successful parents fund programs. Through gifts to both the annual fund and the capital campaign, parents provide valuable support to these two institutions and to many others as well.

The Skidmore Conference: Some useful data

The statistics in Figures 19-1 and 19-2 at the end of the chapter may help you estimate the potential for developing a successful parents fund program at your institution. The information was gathered from parents fund directors who attended a conference at Skidmore College in 1987. They represented six colleges (Group 1), three independent schools (Group 2), and four universities (Group 3). (These institutions submitted their information prior to the end of their annual fund campaigns. Therefore, because these data are, in some cases, only year-end estimates, we've deleted institutional names to avoid misrepresentation.)

The figures can give you a yardstick to project results and measure progress as you begin to develop your own parents fund program.

The institutions that attended the Skidmore Parents Conference are all located in the northeast United States, and many are highly competitive institutions with national reputations. In making comparisons, you should assess the relative position of your own institution in the region from which you draw students. Intangibles (such as status) can affect the attitudes and actions of your prospects, particularly if they are parents who are grateful that their son or daughter has been admitted to your institution. Moreover, the tuition these parents are able to pay may indicate their ability to be generous with discretionary income.

At the Skidmore Conference, one very successful parents fund director pointed out that the wealth of parents and their willingness to volunteer time and make financial contributions can often be correlated with their own educational backgrounds. She found her best parent volunteers and donors were themselves graduates of prestigious colleges and universities. These individuals were not only knowledgeable about the importance of philanthropy, but knew how to ask for gifts—they had experience as class agents, members of reunion giving committees, and, in some instances, as participants in parents fund-raising programs at independent schools.

In reviewing Figure 19-1, note how long each program has been in operation. None has existed for fewer than five years. Unfortunately, we couldn't obtain accurate information about the early years of many programs. Indeed, most parents fund directors weren't sure when their programs actually began. Some said their institutions had operated such a program for nearly 40 years, while others had run an organized program of solicitation for only five to 10 years although the institutions had "accepted" gifts for decades.

The average participation rate for parents solicited by the colleges and independent schools in Groups 1 and 2 was 30 percent; that for the universities in Group 3 was closer to 35 percent (see Figure 19-2). In estimating the development of your program, project growth in participation over a five- to seven-year period, perhaps beginning at 15 percent and accelerating to 30 percent, in 5-percent increments every other year. Thus, in years one and two,

the participation would be 15 percent; in years three and four, the participation would be 20 percent; and so on, until you reached 30 percent in year seven.

If your institution's alumni records contain parents' addresses, you can solicit parents of graduates in the first year of your program. "Graduate parents" are especially important to the long-term growth of your program; parents of graduates provided 44 percent of the total parents fund gifts for the colleges in Group 1. As the number of graduate parents increases, so too will the cost efficiency of your program. (More information about this aspect of parent giving is contained in Chapter 25.)

The size of the average gift from parents at your institution will depend on several factors, some of which are beyond your control, such as the wealth of your parent constituency and how parents feel about their students' experiences at your institution. Factors within your control—or that of your institution—include the quality of your prospect research and the resources available to your program. You will need good research, and you will need time, money, and staff to prepare and execute effective mail and phone campaigns, organize volunteers, and make staff calls on top donors.

The average gift per donor and per student for each group of institutions represented in Figure 19-1 was as follows:

- small colleges (Group 1): $127 per undergraduate and $213 per donor;
- independent schools (Group 2): $280 per student and $301 per donor;
- universities (Group 3): $206 per undergraduate and $100 per donor.

In determining the average gift goal to strive for in the early years of your parents fund program, consider the potential of your parent constituency and the resources your institution is willing to put into such a program. Be conservative in your expectations at the outset. We suggest that you allow for an average gift per donor of $50 in year one and project increases of $10 per year. This would give you an average gift of $90 in year five and $110 in year seven.

This slow progression, combined with the increasing participation rates mentioned above, should bring you to a "break-even" mark in about the third year of operation. And by the end of the fifth year, you should be able to pay back all of your start-up costs. When referring to start-up costs, we are including staff-related expenses such as salaries, publication expenses, and initial investments made to market the new program (more about this in the section on staffing and budget below). From that point on, your cost per gift will drop from $.50 per dollar raised to a more acceptable $.10 to $.15 per dollar. But reaching this "mature" stage will take time, especially for smaller colleges and independent schools. Universities may reach this level sooner because they usually have a larger parent constituency with which to work.

Figure 19-3 outlines the projected growth for a parents fund over a seven-year period. You may think *your* program can be more successful, and you may be right. But do not burden yourself with high expectations at the outset. Remind yourself, and the administrators who will be expecting you to reach your ambitious goal, that it takes time to get on a firm footing and begin to

show real—not just paper—profits. Even the most successful small business does not show a 100 percent return on investment after five years, not to mention a 500 or 600 percent return when they reach maturity—and this is what a parents fund can expect once it is well-established.

If the numbers in Figure 19-3 are not enough to encourage you to begin a parents fund program at your institution, remember that all the data and statistics discussed thus far have been for the annual fund. Colleges with well-developed parents fund programs also report substantial capital gifts from parents, and many of these donors were identified and solicited only because there was a parents annual fund program at their institutions. At Hartwick, for example, $2 million in gifts from parents was received during its last capital campaign, a full 20 percent of the total.

Gathering fund-raising information on parents

Institutions vary in the way they choose to gather information on incoming parents. Most use either or both of two methods:

- distributing a parent information form or survey;
- gleaning information from the admission application.

Information form or survey. Many institutions include a parent information form in the orientation packet. The form collects basic personal and professional information. Questions ask for professional field, title, business and home address, phone number, where the parent attended college and what degrees he or she earned, and family history, which includes information about grandparents and siblings. (See Figure 19-4 for the University of Vermont's parents program data sheet.)

The drawback to this method is that the student fills out the form, and students often record information inaccurately or put in "humorous" *non*information, like the student who wrote "Dad" for his father's title.

You can get more reliable information by mailing a survey, similar in content to the orientation form, directly to parents. Hartwick College has been using a survey since 1982. (See pages 142-43 for the Hartwick College survey.) Development officers have found that the return rate for parent surveys is very high. John Gillespie of Dartmouth College reports return rates as high as 86 percent. Gillespie recommends using an early return date. For example, if you send the forms in mid-June, you might ask that they be returned by July 15.

Institutions that distribute surveys at orientation also have a good return rate if a majority of the students attend the orientation program.

The admission application. At many institutions the admissions office will not share information on the application with the development office because of its confidentiality. Development officers who have been given access to the application form are often restricted and can only see the parent page.

Although this is helpful, it can also be useful to see the financial aid page or the student achievements and essay.

While the information in the application is more limited than that collected in surveys developed by parent fund-raising staffs, it can still be helpful. Most applications include parent name, address, and occupation. The admission application will also tell you if a student has requested financial aid. Parents of a student who needs financial aid are probably not in a position to be top donors.

Many institutions use a combination of these methods. The University of Vermont reviews admission applications in late May to flag potential donors. When the orientation survey is completed, it is compared with the admission application information. If the survey lists a job title that is different from that in the application, the latter is assumed to be correct. Remember that students fill out the orientation form, but parents often help with the admission application.

Another less formal method of gathering information on parents may be the most important, and that is to contact parents who are already involved in parents programs at your institution. Every year the University of Vermont asks the parent volunteers to review printouts of all new students and make comments on any whom they know personally. This is a good way to identify some of the better prospects in a class.

What do you do with the information once you have it? Most institutions have a system to put prospects into three large categories:

- prospects at the $100 level or below;
- prospects at the $1,000 level or above; and
- prospects in the middle.

The middle category usually contains many ambiguous prospects—that is, they may belong in the top category, but you can't determine this from the existing information. You'll probably have to visit the prospect to determine his or her giving capacity. Doctors, lawyers, veterinarians, and corporate executives who are senior vice presidents or executive officers are usually in this group.

The top category includes parents who are chief executive officers, partners, and company presidents, as well as people at the top of the financial industry.

Your parents fund program should begin in the summer when you review the incoming parent pool to determine giving level. Whether you do your own research or you have a research department to help, these are the major sources for investigating parent prospects:

1. *Dun & Bradstreet's Million Dollar Directory;*
2. *Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives;*
3. *Who's Who Index to All Books;*
4. *Dun & Bradstreet's Reference Book of Corporate Managements;*
5. *Directory of Corporate Affiliations;*
6. *Social Register;* and

7. *The Foundation Directory*.

Research is the basis for all that happens during the year. The more complete your research during the summer, the better your parents fund will be throughout the year. If your computer system can handle the prospect coding categories mentioned earlier, you will be able to direct different mail appeals to different groups, targeting the large donors for larger gifts. Research and coding will also help you spot potential volunteers and identify parent prospects to visit on the road.

Parent volunteers

While some institutions recruit parent volunteers in name only—that is, the volunteers lend their names to the cause but do not do any real work—others have parent volunteers who are active fund raisers for the institution.

The size of the volunteer groups active at the institutions participating in the Skidmore Conference ranged from 10 to 250 individuals, depending on the size of the institution and the amount of staff time available to serve the volunteers. Dartmouth, for example, had 250 parent volunteers—people who were supportive of the college and had agreed to help in the fund-raising effort—and approximately 85 percent of these volunteers made solicitation calls. Of all the institutions at the Skidmore Conference, Dartmouth had the largest volunteer base. Most institutions had fewer than 100 volunteers.

When recruiting volunteers, however, remember that you should strive for effectiveness rather than quantity. Don't recruit more people than you can manage or more than you need.

Select the parent volunteers who are willing and able to give both time and money to the effort. This group is often called the parents fund committee and is usually selected from the top prospects you identified during the summer months. Most often the president of the institution, the head parents fund volunteer, or the chair of the parents committee writes in the late summer to recruit the new volunteers. Some institutions choose to wait until the student has been at school for a year before recruiting his or her parents. They recruit the summer after the student's freshman year. Both of these methods work, but both have drawbacks.

While recruiting before freshman year may alienate some parents—the student has not even arrived on campus and already they are being asked to give their time and money—most development officers tell us that parents are not usually offended and, if unwilling to serve at this time, will say "yes" the next time around. On the other hand, waiting until after freshman year to give parents time to become familiar with the institution means you miss out on their valuable help during the first year.

After the recruitment letter is mailed, some institutions follow up with a phone call from an upperclass parent volunteer; the volunteer can answer

questions and encourage the new recruit to get involved. This follow-up strategy helps ensure a good return on the recruitment effort.

Prepare job descriptions for the volunteers depending on their expertise and preference. Don't ask a volunteer to solicit gifts if he or she is not comfortable doing so. Assign that person to serve in other non-fund-raising capacities, such as making thank-you calls on top donors.

Even if these volunteers do not bring in gifts for your parents fund, they are likely to support the institution at a higher level and will serve as good resources when you need help in a given region.

For those volunteers who are willing to raise funds, the task is clear. Williams College uses its volunteer group of 59 couples to make personal calls on 600 to 700 potential donors, or 15 percent of its parents fund donor base. The University of Vermont uses the parents fund committee to raise over half of its total parents fund.

Be careful not to assign too many prospects to any one person. At most institutions an individual parent is responsible for five to 10 names. Some development officers assign prospects to each volunteer, and others allow the volunteers to select the prospects they want to contact. If you choose the latter method, give the volunteers a deadline for making their choices; otherwise, your program may fall behind schedule.

Once you have recruited your volunteers, how should you organize your committee? This depends on the needs of your institution and the scope of your program. The parent volunteer committee at the University of Vermont has three levels of leadership:

- a chair of the fund who writes all general appeals and solicits the top 10 donors under the $10,000 range;
- a chair for major annual gifts who writes to, and follows up with, all major annual donor prospects; and
- seven regional vice-chairs who are responsible for seeing that all committee members in their region complete their work on time; these chairs also help with regional receptions.

Parents at the Skidmore Conference repeatedly stressed that members of the parents fund committee must be well-informed if they are to be involved and effective representatives of the college. Access to "inside" information gives parent volunteers a sense of belonging to their children's college or university community. Armed with a clear sense of priorities and an understanding of the institution's mission, these volunteers can help understaffed parent development programs reach exceptional goals.

Solicitations: Direct mail, phonathons, and personal calls

Most institutions use the three standard methods for soliciting gifts: direct mail, phonathons, and personal calls. Although mail solicitations are the least effec-

tive method, most colleges and universities continue to use them. The participating institutions at the Skidmore Conference, for example, were sending between two and eight mail appeals per year. Most of the colleges at the Skidmore Conference sent three, one at the beginning of the school year, one at the end of the calendar year, and one near the end of the fiscal year. Although written solicitations are relatively ineffective, they set the stage for other more successful contacts by phone or in person.

Mail solicitations. The key to writing an effective communication to parents is to write as though you were communicating to an individual, rather than a group. Consider this probably apocryphal tale: A magazine publisher, who was attending a convention, had one of his photographers take a picture of a woman he saw in the lobby of his hotel. He gave a copy of the photograph to each of his writers with the instruction that, "From now on, you're writing for her." Months later he attributed the magazine's turnaround in circulation to that one act. The writers had begun to write for a real person, not for a group.

The story may be fiction but the point is a real one, as true for those of us in the fund-raising business as it is for writers everywhere.

Your text should convey a strong belief in the institution's mission on the part of the person signing the letter. It often helps to have as an advocate someone from the academic side of the institution (a faculty member, dean, provost) or a volunteer. Letters from fund raisers, no matter how well crafted, are suspect in the eyes of many readers. Quotes from faculty, students, and satisfied parents can also help bridge the credibility gap.

Finally, you must remember to ask for the gift. Be specific. Use tactful language, but be clear about your expectations.

After you have written the first draft of your appeal, ask someone you trust to give you an honest unbiased opinion. If your appeal is unconvincing, it's better to find out now than after 5,000 copies have been printed and mailed.

Once you are satisfied with your mass appeal, you can personalize it with a technique made possible by word-processing. You can insert the names of the parents to whom you are writing by merging the names and addresses on your computer file with the text of your appeal. Indeed, this process has become so common that donors expect it.

But be careful if you try to go beyond personalizing the inside address and formal salutation. It's probably better to avoid using an informal salutation or a first name. Many people consider use of their first names to be an unwarranted familiarity. And some people have not been called by their given names since they were toddlers; calling a "Biff" "Clarence" or a "G.T." "Gaillard" only reveals your lack of knowledge of the recipient.

You'll be safer if you personalize the formal salutation and use neutral information for the body of the letter, such as "your son" or "your daughter" or the amount of the parent's last gift or the giving club to which he or she currently belongs.

With every rule there is the exception. If your "mass audience" is a small one, you can personalize further. For example, several years ago the Brunswick School in Greenwich, Connecticut, developed a particularly effective appeal for the annual fund (see Figure 19-5). The parents of every student received a card with a picture of their child on the front. Inside was a note reviewing the recipient's giving to the school over the past two years and suggesting an amount for this year's contribution. The note concluded with an informal salutation and the signature of the volunteer parent solicitor. It was impressive!

Perhaps college and university development officers could adapt this technique by using yearbook photographs of selected graduating seniors. The individual attention would surely be appreciated by prospective donors.

Other more conventional ways to personalize correspondence range from the handwritten postscript to the computer-generated "handwritten" letter. Your techniques will be limited only by your imagination and your resources—the money, time, and staff available. And don't forget to supply a business reply envelope so that it will be easy for the prospective donor to respond to your persuasive appeal.

Phonathons. Although phonathons usually can't duplicate the logical presentation contained in a letter or brochure, this person-to-person contact is crucial to the success of most parent fund-raising programs. Some institutions use parents to make the calls, and others use students. Either method seems to work, but whether you use parents or students, make sure your callers have all the information they need to make the calls.

While most small institutions can generate enthusiasm from undergraduates without paying them, larger universities often pay their callers. At the institutions surveyed for this chapter, only a small number were using paid callers; however, those that were paying their callers reported that the average dollars per call made were higher than when volunteers made the calls. Paid callers are more reliable and tend to be better trained in fund raising. Most often they are students on campus who are willing to go through extensive training to learn both about the institution and about the importance of annual funds.

If you want to go this route, hire your own students to make the calls or use an outside firm. When the University of Vermont paid students to call nondonors, it doubled pledges over the previous year. Although telemarketing firms are controversial, many institutions are choosing that option. The only caution is that you examine the firms carefully before hiring one.

Several years ago, both Dartmouth College and St. Lawrence University began using phonathons to thank donors. The results were fantastic. In addition to generating good will, these phone calls frequently produce unexpected results: One donor may give the caller information about other parents with philanthropic interests; another, during the course of the conversation, may decide to increase his or her original gift.

Personal calls. The single most important ingredient in raising large sums of money is probably the impression made by the institution's president,

trustees, staff members, and parent volunteers during personal visits to top prospects. More and more parents fund volunteers are becoming key solicitors, and it is in this area that they can be the most help. Institutions that use volunteers to solicit person-to-person are showing increased annual funds. The team approach—a parent and staff member—can be very effective; the staff member contributes information about the institution, and the parent adds the peer perspective.

If you have assigned prospects to your volunteers by region, it is easy to ask a volunteer to join you on a solicitation call. Whether the volunteer accompanies you or another staff person or makes the visit alone, make sure that he or she has all the appropriate information on the prospect. Ignorance is *not* bliss.

Most development officers would probably agree that the most effective solicitation begins with a personal letter, is followed by a phone call to arrange a meeting, and concludes with a person-to-person visit and "ask."

Staffing and budget

The ways in which educational institutions staff parents fund programs are as varied as the institutions themselves. However, the survey responses at the Skidmore Conference indicated that of those participating institutions, most had a fund raiser/program coordinator and a secretary for the parents fund. Independent schools and small colleges most often had half-time people in these two positions, while universities of 5,000 or more students were able to maintain full-time slots.

Salaries and fringe benefits differ greatly too. In order to project costs for a parents fund program, we assumed the full-time professional's salary to be $25,000 and the secretary's to be $12,500, with fringe benefits of 20 percent (see Figure 19-6).

The type of program you wish to run will determine your mailing costs. Two dollars per parent should cover:

- an initial mailing that includes a brochure about the annual fund campaign, a cover letter, and a business reply envelope;
- a follow-up mailing at the end of the calendar and fiscal years; and
- pledge reminders.

Thus, if your institution has 2,300 potential parent donors, you would need to budget $4,600 for stationery, printing costs, and postage. Telephone expenses should also be estimated at $2 per parent solicited. (It will probably be less if you use volunteers instead of paid callers, but in the long run you may make more with paid callers.)

We estimate travel costs at $5,000 for a half-time professional and $10,000 for a full-time person. This is based on a cost of $100 to $200 a day for solicitations made in major cities (not including transportation to and from the

location). If your big donors are in suburban and rural areas, the daily expenses should be half as great. A $5,000 budget should allow a half-time person to make about 75 personal solicitations to the best prospects; a $10,000 budget should allow for 150 visits with the best potential donors. Allow for two to four calls per day, depending on the region, and an average of 12 calls per week over six to 14 weeks.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed parent fund raising from a very elementary perspective. We hoped to give you not only the impetus to begin a program but also the tools to get started. As you work with parents, it is always best to keep in mind the audience or constituency—*parents*; parents are very different from alumni. Their needs are different, and they have a fresh perspective that can be used to your institution's advantage. If your institution is looking for new ways to expand the donor base, parents should immediately come to mind. Many institutions are even expanding to include grandparents programs, and they are experiencing great success. Parents programs can only improve your fund-raising efforts.

Figure 19-1: Institutions Participating in the Skidmore Conference, 1987

Group 1 (Colleges)	Tuition	Enrollment	Years of parents fund	Average parent gift per donor	Average parent gift per student
A	$11,910	1,600	5+	$145	$114
B	11,355	2,147	5+	277	136
C	9,350	1,400	9	145	113
D	11,250	1,950	34	243	151
E	12,000	1,950	5+	245	96
F	10,968	1,973	11	225	154
Group 2 (Independent Schools)					
G	6,400	280	34	378	519
H	8,200	1,050	7+	204	174
I	7,300	519	10	259	209
Group 3 (Universities)					
J	12,890	6,500	5+	255	86
K	12,500	4,500	38	188	149
L	11,750	4,400	7	246	103
M	8,184	7,882	8	133	62

Figure 19-2: Parents Fund Comparative Data

	Parents of current students			Parents of graduates				
Group 1 (Colleges)	Parents solicited	Donors	Dollars raised	Parents solicited	Donors	Dollars raised	Parent gifts total	Annual fund total
A	1,679	658	103,550	2,488	596	78,873	$182,423	$3,294,606
B	2,699	575	160,000	2,269	475	130,935	290,935	1,390,935
C	1,544	586	85,159	1,251	507	73,150	158,309	1,210,000
D	2,315	696	199,913	1,170	517	95,072	294,985	1,228,742
E	1,971	265	53,537	3,162	502	134,394	187,931	6,000,000
F	1,869	673	190,840	3,357	679	113,169	303,968	3,914,300
Group 2 (Independent Schools)								
G	278	125	48,113	1,377	260	97,434	145,574	718,973
H	1,172	344	71,386	7,174	551	110,882	182,268	1,050,000
I	527	266	81,678	771	155	27,209	108,887	482,866
Group 3 (Universities)								
J	5,330	1,600	NA	2,000	600	NA	561,000	20,000,000
K	4,150	1,780	354,299	5,149	1,774	314,400	668,699	17,200,000
L	4,000	NA	NA	400	NA	NA	454,834	5,000,000
M	7,280	3,050	452,664	1,560	605	32,336	485,000	2,942,479

NA: Not available

Figure 19-3: Projected Growth for a Parents Fund

Year	No. of parents solicited	Percent of participation	Average gift (dollars)	Total income (dollars)
Groups 1 and 2				
1	2,000	15	50	15,000
2	2,100	15	60	18,900
3	2,200	20	70	30,800
4	2,300	20	80	36,800
5	2,400	25	90	54,000
6	2,500	25	100	62,000
7	2,600	30	110	85,800
Group 3				
1	5,000	15	50	37,500
2	5,250	15	60	47,250
3	5,500	20	70	77,000
4	5,750	20	80	92,000
5	6,000	25	90	135,000
6	6,250	25	100	156,250
7	6,500	30	110	214,500

Figure 19-4: Parents Program Data Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT **PARENTS PROGRAM DATA SHEET**

SELF:
Name _____
Social Security # _____
High School Attended: _____

FATHER:
Name _____ (Title / First / Middle / Last)
Street Address _____
City/State/Zip _____ Home Phone (Area Code) _____
Employer (name of business) _____
Business Title _____
Business Address _____
City/State/Zip _____ Business Phone (Area Code) _____
College Attended _____

MOTHER:
Name _____ (Title / First / Maiden / Last)
Street Address _____
City/State/Zip _____ Home Phone (Area Code) _____
Employer (name of business) _____
Business Title _____
Business Address _____
City/State/Zip _____ Business Phone (Area Code) _____
College Attended _____

GRANDPARENTS:
Name _____ Name _____
Address _____ Address _____
City/State/Zip _____ City/State/Zip _____

BROTHERS/SISTERS:
Name _____ HS/College Attended _____
Name _____ HS/College Attended _____
Name _____ HS/College Attended _____
Name _____ HS/College Attended _____

If you do not live with both parents, to whom should university correspondence be addressed: _____

If parent/guardian information is not applicable, please use for information on self and/or spouse.

Figure 19-5: Brunswick School Appeal

His future deserves the best . . .

Figure 19-6: Estimated Costs for a Parents Fund

Groups 1 and 2		
Half-time staff and 20 percent fringe benefits		$22,500
Program coordinator	$15,000	
Secretarial staff	7,500	
Mailing (2,300 solicitable parents at $2 each)		4,600
Phonathon (2,300 solicitable parents at $2 each)		4,600
Travel (75 personal visits in 6–7 weeks)		5,000
Miscellaneous (10 percent of personnel expenses)		2,250
TOTAL		$38,950
Group 3		
Full-time staff and 20 percent fringe benefits		$45,000
Program coordinator	$30,000	
Secretarial staff	15,000	
Mailing (5,750 solicitable parents at $2 each)		11,500
Phonathon (5,750 solictable parents at $2 each)		11,500
Travel (150 personal visits in 12–14 weeks)		10,000
Miscellaneous (10 percent of personnel expenses)		4,500
TOTAL		$82,500

Chapter 20

Starting Your Program Perfectly

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This chapter doesn't promise a "never-fail" method of raising money from parents. Instead it offers one approach to implementing a parents fund program. It worked for us; it may work for you too.

There are three initial steps to take if you are beginning a program to solicit funds from parents:

- perform a needs assessment;
- gather institutional support; and
- organize a committee of parent volunteers.

Performing a needs assessment

A parents program is usually initiated in one of two ways:

- a member of the development staff, after evaluating the constituency, current parent giving, and the maturity and completeness of the development program, decides it is time to begin formally soliciting parents; or
- an administrator (usually the president), who is the parent of a student at another institution, is receiving solicitations and decides that a parents program is critical to the well-being of the institution.

In either case, the process begins with a needs assessment.

In the first situation, the decision to begin the program is based on the *outcome* of an analysis of resources as revealed through the needs assessment.

In the second scenario, an assessment is used to decide the best *method* for accomplishing a strong program—that is, the program has been mandated so the needs assessment does not determine whether or not to put a program in place but how to do it.

In either case, if you are the development officer responsible for starting a program, you must assess the situation, the desired outcome, and what currently is in place that will help to achieve these goals.

Begin by answering these three questions: How much of whose staff time should be devoted to this project? How much money can reasonably be raised? How much of the program will be new and how much will it cost? Each of these elements is related to the others.

Staffing. Reviewing the accessibility of student information will help you determine staffing needs for a parents program. These data include parents' names and addresses, other relationships to the institution, mother's maiden name, parents' occupations, and so on. Student records are usually housed in the admissions office or in student services. You should also examine the cultivation events, special activities, and regular parent programs (including orientation and parents weekend) already in place at your institution. The more information that is accessible and the more events that are already in place, the less staff time will be needed for the program.

The amount of staff time will also depend on the goal of the program and how important the program is to the institution's overall development plan. Running a full-fledged solicitation program with heavy reliance upon volunteers demands much more staff time than mailing a general solicitation letter. For instance, if you use direct mail for all your annual fund solicitations, it's easy to include the parent constituency. You can even use a similar letter adapted to reflect the nature of parents' relationship to the institution.

If you discover there is a fair amount of wealth in the parent constituency, it makes sense to use personal solicitations and a volunteer committee. This will involve much more staff time. If you are planning personal solicitations, look at the geographic distribution of the parents—are they in the same place as alumni, for example? This will help you determine whether visits to parent prospects can be piggybacked onto responsibilities of staff who may be visiting the area for other reasons.

Goal determination. As you set a goal for your parents fund, consider the computer support or management information available to the development office. While personal calls and volunteer phonathons are far more effective than direct mail, such a campaign depends largely on the availability of computer support, research information, and staff time. If yours is a small office with few other resources available to you, you'll probably have to run a campaign based primarily on direct mail. This will cost less and take less time, but the results will be much less too.

Use the following factors to help determine your goal:

- the accuracy of addresses and phone numbers already on file;

- parents' occupations;
- the percentage of students receiving some sort of financial aid;
- the relationships of the parent constituency to your institution (an institution with an enrollment primarily of commuting students does not usually involve parents in orientation or campus visits); and
- the parents' alma maters (parents who attended institutions with strong alumni giving programs or who attended—or sent their children to—a preparatory school are already educated about philanthropy and often expect to be asked for a significant gift to the institution).

Budget. The budget for a parents program depends on what your fundraising and cultivation plans are. Here again, whether you are focusing on method (program) or on goal (dollars raised) is important. Always look carefully at cultivation activities, already in place, that might easily include parent solicitation.

Institutional support

Without institutional support, your parents fund is likely to have little or no success. A good parents program relies on the close relationship between the development officer and other institutional officials who work with parents and students. In many institutions, the development office is considered somewhat of an anomaly in the academic world. The development officer's attempt to start a new program, especially one that involves a constituency administrators and faculty may view as "theirs," may not sit well with the institutional community if these officials have not been been previously consulted and invited to participate or at least to support the effort.

Therefore, if you are planning such a program, it's important to explain to others in the administration why a parents fund is a critical part of a complete advancement program. This discussion should include mention of components of a parents program in addition to solicitation. Development staff have easy access to parents and can assess and report on parent interest in all areas of the institution, including admissions, career planning, and research. All avenues of access to parents will support the development office and will augment the programs of others in the institution at no cost to them. Parents are strong volunteers once they are involved. Many parents are particularly useful for admissions, career planning, and other solicitations.

Here are three methods to elicit this much needed support from your institutional colleagues:

1. Define your role. You and your staff can be most effective if you serve as liaison to parents. In this way, you are aware of the interaction between the institution and the parent prospects and can pass on comments or complaints, without trespassing on areas outside your purview.

2. Earn trust. Remind yourself and persuade other segments of the institution that you and your staff are advancement professionals, not just fund raisers. Emphasize your larger role, especially as it encompasses such areas as events planning and information sharing (these areas are more familiar to other administrators). To earn a reputation as more than a fund raiser, volunteer for activities that will benefit other offices while supporting your implementation of the parents program. For instance, help to pay for a parent reception on opening day, advise students, or use a parent contact to help bring a corporate recruiter to campus.

3. Involve others at the institution. It is important to explain the parameters of this new program to all personnel who will be touched in some way by these activities. Whenever feasible, involve all interested people in gathering information, planning programs, and executing special activities. Parents enjoy activities that include faculty members, administrators, and student services personnel, and it benefits your program—and those of your colleagues—to expose parents to all aspects of the institution.

Rallying the support of your colleagues is critical. Remember, a new program will not work in a vacuum. Often, these administrators hold information critical to your success. You can earn their trust by explaining the goals of your new program and keeping them informed; but remember that communication works both ways—you should understand why others may be skeptical about your program and try to speak to these concerns. There is often a concern that solicitations, especially for large gifts, occur regardless of whether the student's experience at the institution is a positive one. Involve colleagues in strategizing a solicitation of a parent they know or in whom they have a particular interest.

Creating a committee

The most effective way to raise money from parents is to use parent volunteers. A parents committee provides the structure to involve and train volunteers. To form such a committee, you must first determine how many volunteers you need and what they will do. Then you will have to recruit the members. Once you have done that, your real work begins.

A parents committee provides the impetus to move your program forward. If properly managed and motivated, committee members will quickly begin to take over the ownership of the program and to provide the leadership necessary for long-term success.

Determining committee size. The size of the committee depends on its goals and its degree of responsibility. A "names only" committee can be as big or as small as the group of prestigious people willing to lend their names to your enterprise, but the parents volunteer committee will, you hope, be a working committee. There should be enough people to share the work and

the responsibility but not so many that decision making becomes impossible, and there aren't enough assignments to go around.

You can prevent this by creating a job description for each volunteer position within the committee. (See the sample at the end of this chapter.) Writing these job descriptions will help you determine how many people you need; it will help you recruit volunteers; and it will add an air of professionalism and credibility to the program.

Selecting committee members. When you begin inviting volunteers to serve on the committee, ask for suggestions from other parent volunteers and from administrators and faculty who work with parents. You should also consider the demographics of the constituency. Try to select committee members to represent the different geographic regions from which your institution draws students, the ethnic groups, the class years, and so on. Here again, parents who have already learned the habit of volunteer service through previous collegiate affiliations are good possibilities.

It is important when you are soliciting parent involvement to be quite clear about your expectations about their gifts and the level of their involvement. Have the person soliciting their participation refer clearly to the job description. The "ask" should always be made by someone with influence. An invitation from the chairperson of the parents committee or the president of the institution endows the program with prestige and authenticity. It is best to have a volunteer make the initial ask for participation with follow-up provided by staff. This gives your new volunteer a clear staff connection to the institution.

Holding meetings. Committees should meet in a comfortable environment. Making volunteerism convenient conveys the impression that you understand and respect your volunteers' busy schedules. Many institutions hold committee meetings on parents weekend. If you choose to do this, check the weekend schedule carefully before you set the meeting time. You don't want your meeting to prevent a parent from attending a son's favorite class or a daughter's tennis match.

Don't schedule a meeting unless there's a purpose for it. Good volunteers are busy people. Use committee meetings to solicit volunteers' ideas and opinions, to apprise them of "breaking news" at the institution, and to keep them up-to-date on the progress of the program. Don't try to run the meeting yourself, but ask a volunteer to serve as chair. This gives the committee members a sense of autonomy and encourages their ownership of the enterprise.

In sum, the parents committee is the best method to involve parents and to solicit funds. The size and dynamics of the committee are determined by the goals of the program. Use the vehicle of the parents committee to provide your volunteers with the information they need to feel more involved and to be more effective.

Parents: A different constituency

While it's important, especially for institutions with limited development budgets, to look for ways to incorporate fund-raising efforts for parents into those for other constituencies, we mustn't overlook the fact that parents are different from other prospects in the following ways:

1. Information gathering is difficult. Students are not always accurate when they fill out forms. When asked to write down a parent's occupation, a student may respond with an answer that doesn't tell you whether the parent is a member of the sanitation team or in top management. It helps to ask specific questions on either the admissions application or on an information sheet. (Figure 20-1 at the end of the chapter shows a matriculation card that collects this information.)

You should also provide a method to record changes in parent information. You want to know if parents get divorced or move. In the best scenario, the development office shares an information system with other offices in the institution—with limited accessibility to classified information.

2. Hearsay or anecdotal information can be frustrating. When you receive information about students and parents, be sure to get specific details. It is hard to pin down anecdotal information about a potential major parent prospect if the paper trail is weak. More often than is comfortable, you hear a story like this one: The CEO of a major corporation is thrilled to have her son attending your institution and is ready and willing to give a substantial gift. But when you rush to the records to locate this person, you realize that no student with the last name of the corporate executive is currently enrolled. Perhaps she kept her maiden name or divorced the student's father and remarried. Perhaps the son transferred to another institution last year and the hot tip is an old one.

This lack of information can be frustrating but it also gives you a good opportunity to ask for help from colleagues in the institution. Others on campus may have heard a more detailed version of the story and may be able to help you. (For example, you may learn from the admissions office that the student has just been accepted and will be a freshman next fall.)

3. Parents have a special relationship to the institution. A parent's primary perception of your institution often comes filtered through the experiences of his or her student. Involving parents in volunteer committees enables them to develop their own independent impressions of your institution. Nevertheless, if a student's experience is a very bad one, his or her parents may not be good prospects.

It's a good idea to check into the standing of a student before asking his or her parent for a significant commitment of time or money (or both). You don't necessarily need to cross a parent off your list if the student is not doing well, but knowing this fact may affect your timing and prevent an embarrassing situation from developing. While most parents know that a large gift to the

institution will have no effect on the student's academic standing, they may still feel resentful if they find they've sent a check to an institution that is failing their son or daughter. (In such a case, it's better to allow the parent to cancel the check than to attempt to keep the gift.)

4. Parents prefer to give to a specific cause that will benefit students. Parents tend to be most interested in restricted current giving. Your solicitations are likely to be more effective if you focus on a particular area of funding such as library acquisition, computer facilities, career planning, or other resources that parents believe will be utilized by their children. Every campus at every time has its "hot" issues. Use parents, students, and administrators to discover what these are, but avoid controversial or transient problems, especially if you don't have the power to do anything about them.

Final thoughts

It helps to know what's happening on campus and who is affected. Expect to do a lot of your work outside your office and after regular office hours. Get to know as many students as you can, especially those whose parents are actively involved with the institution, whether they are financial supporters or loyal volunteers. The parents who will ask other parents to give to the institution show a loyalty beyond that of the checkbook. But don't ignore the students whose parents never show up at all. Maybe there's a reason for this lack of interest, and it might help you—and the institution—if you knew what it was.

Never lose your perspective of the "big picture." As a staff member on a campus with a strong parents program, you know more about the campus and the students. This can only serve you well with any constituency and give you an important connection to the institution.

Good luck. Never stop talking with colleagues.

Job Description for Parents Committee Members

Active participation in the Parents Committee is a rewarding way to share in your son's or daughter's college years. This committee functions as the executive arm of the Parents Association of which all parents are members. Its members serve as liaisons between the college and all parents and are responsible for several important programs.

The Committee is comprised of parents from each class, and members serve throughout their son or daughter's college years.

An Executive Council of the Committee, comprised of five current parent coordinators, coordinates a portion of the Parents Committee. In addition, a graduate parent coordinator and a coordinator of career planning work with the director of career planning.

The college provides full staff support to the Committee. The secretary of the Parents Association serves as the staff representative and may be called on to assist in any aspect of the Committee's work.

Our college depends on the support of the Parents Committee in several essential areas:

1. Parents Fund: The annual Parents Fund continues to help bridge the gap between the expenses of the college and the revenues realized from tuition. In 1988-89, the Parents Fund ranked [ ] in the nation in terms of dollars raised and second to [ ] among the private colleges with which we compare ourselves.

The success of the Parents Fund can be directly attributed to past and present members of the Parents Committee. Each year, Committee members personally visit or telephone other parents to enlist their support of the college. In 1989-90, Parents Committee members will be asked to contact 10 to 15 other parents before Thanksgiving and to complete five to eight follow-up calls in the spring.

2. Admissions: Parents Committee members will be called upon to assist the admissions office in its efforts to attract first-rate students to our college. They may be asked to identify top candidates for admission, encourage accepted students to attend, and/or host send-off picnics for entering freshmen. The latter is a great way to welcome new students and their parents, and it sets the tone for their four years at our college.

3. Career counseling: Parents Committee members often aid students in their career decisions by serving on Career Conference panels or offering to speak with interested students on a one-to-one basis. Committee members can also be helpful in suggesting that their companies recruit on campus.

4. Advice and counsel: The Parents Committee is encouraged to provide feedback and advice to members of the college community. The president and the members of the president's staff welcome the advice and counsel of Committee members on all topics relating to the college and its programs.

The following are some of the specific expectations held by and for members of the Parents Committee:

1. to initiate the fall solicitation and appropriate follow-up of major gifts from approximately 10 to 15 parents who have been identified by the development office;

2. to solicit parents who did not respond to the fall appeal described above;

3. to serve on one of the appropriate subcommittees (Parents Events, Career Counseling, Admissions, and so on) if desired;

4. to attend the annual Parents Committee meeting held during Parents Weekend;

5. to contribute approximately [$1,000 or more] to the Parents Fund;

6. to participate in the major functions of the Committee if possible—i.e., Parents Weekend, New Student Picnics, telethons, and so on; and

7. to provide feedback to the secretary concerning the college's fund-raising efforts and any other aspects of institutional activity.

This example has been depersonalized. You should insert the name of your institution as frequently as possible.

Figure 20-1: Matriculation Card

COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES - MATRICULATION CARD - CLASS OF 1992

PLEASE PRINT

First Name Middle Name Last Name

HOME
ADDRESS Street

City/State/Country / / Zip

Home Tel. ( ) Date of Birth Soc. Sec. #

Father's Full Name

Father's Address (if different from yours)

His College(s) Undergraduate Degree(s) Year(s) Graduated

His Graduate School(s) Graduate Degree(s)

Mother's (Maiden) Name

Mother's Address (if different from yours)

Her College(s) Undergraduate Degree(s) Year(s) Graduated

Her Graduate School(s) Graduate Degree

Check if appropriate:

Father Deceased Mother Deceased Parents Separated

Parents Divorced Father Remarried Mother Remarried

Father's Profession or Occupation Check if Retired

Name of Firm Position

Business Phone ( )

Mother's Profession or Occupation Check if Retired

Name of Firm Position

Business Address

Business Phone ( )

Please list all relatives (including your immediate family) who have attended COLORADO SCHOOL OF MINES.

Name (Include Maiden Name)	Relationship	Grad. Year	Name (Include Maiden Name)	Relationship	Grad. Year

Hometown Newspaper

Chapter 21

Managing a Parents Annual Giving Campaign at an Independent School

Carolyn Smith
Assistant Headmaster for Development
Colorado Academy

Managing parent fund raising is like trying to impose order on the bubbles rising to the surface of a glass of champagne. Not only is it hard (if not impossible) to make your parent volunteers toe the line, in most cases you don't want them to. You need the effervescent imagination and energy that parent leaders can bring to your fund-raising effort. On the other hand, you *do* need order in your fund-raising program: You need a plan, goals, and a calendar.

As a fund-raising professional, one of your greatest challenges is to combine the enthusiasm and energy that are unique to parent volunteers with the orderly procedures necessary to meet the fund-raising expectations appropriate to your institution. There's no question that involvement by parents in fund raising (or any other volunteer activities for that matter) comes a bit more naturally for parents at independent schools (particularly day schools) than it does for parents of college students. Parents who volunteer in schools are still a welcome sight to younger children. But by the time those children reach high school, they are less eager to see their parents.

Whatever the age of the students, however, it's important to respect and be sensitive to the dynamics of the parent-child relationship. And if you have any doubts, ask the parents what they feel comfortable doing at and for the school.

The dean of fund raising, Harold J. Seymour, once said, "You need [people] more than money," and it's true. As a fund raiser you can be *sure* that your institutional goals will be met when your leaders—trustees and annual giving chair—ask their peers not only to give but to solicit gifts as well. This is the kind of commitment you need from all your volunteers, whether they are parents, alumni, or friends.

Planning your campaign: Enlisting leaders

A key question is, who will chair the parent annual campaign? Should you choose the prominent businessperson—the queen (or king) bee—who has loaned his or her name to every worthwhile cause in the area? This person might get you in a lot of doors, but will he or she dig in every step of the way *and* at the end of the campaign when there's just 2 percent left to raise or 10 more donations to secure? Or should you choose, instead, the hard-working, loyal, available, and dedicated person (the worker bee) who will be there with you and your institution from the beginning to well after the end? In every case, I've chosen the latter, and he or she has served Colorado Academy (CA) with dedication beyond expectations.

At Colorado Academy, all of our parent campaign leaders over the past 10 years have been different; they have brought with them different insights, backgrounds, and business and personal experiences; each has left his or her mark on the job. One helped us to create a computer-based campaign; another could open any door; a third took the perennial nondonors as a personal challenge. But they all had a fervid interest in the education their child was receiving from Colorado Academy, and each and every one demonstrated a 100-percent commitment to the establishment and fulfillment of CA's parent campaign goals. All were CA trustees as well, so they had an extra sense of responsibility for the school. (As is typical of day schools that are relatively young, over 85 percent of our trustees are present or former school parents.)

The figures tell the story best. In 1978-79 when I coordinated my first annual campaign, we had two goals: to raise a total of $150,000 ($80,000 from parents) and to have 60-percent parent participation. Last year our goals were to raise $280,000 ($150,000 from parents) with 90-percent parent participation.

Why were these parents willing to undertake this leadership task? There were a number of reasons. As trustees, they knew that the annual giving campaign was essential to a healthy school budget. They understood that we must raise approximately $480 per student so that faculty and staff salaries and benefits can increase; scholarship funds can grow; and academic, athletic, and arts programs can remain excellent. They were asked by the board president to take on this critically important leadership role, and they were assured of support by all of the trustees and by the development office staff.

But of all the factors, perhaps the most important was that we offered them a job that was manageable. Most volunteer leaders and workers do best if they don't have to bite off more than they can chew. Give them manageable expectations: If you ask them to call all the parents in the third grade, for example (at CA this is about 50 contacts), they probably won't do it. They might accept the assignment, but fail to find the time to complete such a big job. Then they will feel guilty, on the one hand, and resentful on the other, because you gave them more than they could handle.

Instead, you should suggest to the parent campaign leader that he or she ask a parent to head the *team* for each class. This class leader will then find four or five other people (we call them "class callers") to share the responsibility for that particular class. Set a specific time in which the class team uses phonathons and personal appeals to try to secure gifts from all the parents in each class.

Helping volunteers help you: A campaign calendar

In order to get and keep the parent leaders you need at every level of your annual giving campaign, you should provide your volunteers with:

- a specific job description involving
- a limited number of calls to be performed within
- a specific timeframe.

In order to do this, we've developed an annual giving calendar that provides both a specific timeframe and a job description for the parent campaign leader. The calendar that follows is based on CA's 1988-89 campaign year.

May: The board president, after consultation with the development director and overall chair of the annual campaign, secures chairs for each constituency within the annual campaign—parents, grandparents, alumni, friends, corporations, and foundations.

Early in June: The parent campaign leader meets with development office staff to discuss and decide:

- year-long goals (including money goals and participation goals);
- organization and review of staff support and general procedures (this ensures that the new parent campaign leader has input into campaign plans and that he or she has a good understanding of how the campaign works—from start to finish);
- key volunteer roles—who will fill them, who will invite these parents to serve, and how they will be organized: (1) by school division (i.e., Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School) under a vice chair; (2) by class; and (3) by class callers within each class;
- what mailings will be needed; who will write them; and what the deadlines will be. Letters should be different for different groups within the parent body—new parents, parents, past donors, nondonors, etc.; and

• what market segments will be approached and how—i.e., how many parents will be considered major gift prospects, and how they will be approached.

The parent campaign leader and the development office establish the trustee challenges and the gift clubs. In 1988-89 the trustees challenged the parents to earn two challenge grants of $5,000 each by (1) reaching 70-percent parent participation by Thanksgiving and (2) reaching 90-percent participation by June 30, 1989.

Colorado Academy has three gift clubs—the Alchemist Club ($1,000 to $1,999), the Headmaster's Club ($2,000 to $2,999), and the Leadership Roundtable ($3,000 and above).

June-July: During these two months, the parent campaign leader enlists volunteer leaders: a major gifts chair and class leaders. He or she confirms, in writing, assignments for all class leaders and outlines the campaign goals. The development office prepares enclosures including an outline of organizational structure, a campaign calendar, and the copy for the annual campaign brochure.

On CA stationery and with aid from the development office as needed, the parent campaign leader writes the letters that will be sent to all parents in September. Different letters are sent to past donors, nondonors, and new parents. The major gifts chair creates a letter also. In actuality, I often write the letters for the volunteer leaders. But if they want to write them, they are invited and encouraged to do so. Again, the more involved they are, the more they have invested in the success of the campaign.

The development staff creates the supporting documents for the letters. We send all constituents—parents, alumni and their parents, grandparents, staff, and friends a brochure that states our case, including CA's income in graph form, its needs, and a description of giving clubs (see Figure 21-1 at end of chapter).

We use other enclosures for specific targets such as an annual giving case statement for major donors. And we enclose matching gift information in the letters to every constituency.

August 24: We hold a planning retreat/orientation for parent class leaders. Unfortunately in recent years, the word "orientation" has come to mean a program that is repetitive, uninspired, and boring. So the parent campaign leader will need to use his or her best skills of persuasion to entice the class leaders to attend this program.

The orientation retreat is designed to inform, involve, and excite the class leaders. It brings home the importance of their role as fund raisers for the school. And once they commit to come to the retreat, we find they soon become interested and enthusiastic. These are the people who, if carefully groomed, will become your future campaign leaders, school trustees, and significant donors, so it's important that you put your best foot forward at this step of the campaign.

Invite those officials from your institution whose presence will demonstrate the importance of the orientation as well as that of the annual campaign.

Include the school head, significant trustees, and others who will help motivate and inspire your volunteer leaders and callers. Be sure to include some social time for retreat participants.

Choose a convenient location but one that will, if possible, discourage interruptions. If you can find such a place on your campus, so much the better. The retreat should take no more than two to three hours. You might hold it early in the morning, for example, or late in the afternoon and into the early evening. Select a time and place that are best for your volunteers and the people from your school who will be attending.

Certainly the school should underwrite the planning/orientation retreat, but you may have to convince your bosses that the orientation program is critical to the success of the whole campaign year.

September 6: The president of the board of trustees sends a letter of welcome to new parents and mentions briefly the many ways parents are involved in the school, including their importance in the upcoming annual giving campaign.

September 8: Board president and campaign chair send a solicitation letter to the trustees; we expect 100-percent participation by the first board meeting on September 21, and we work hard to get it *at least* by the end of the fiscal year.

Throughout the campaign, gifts are acknowledged immediately with a gift receipt, a letter from the headmaster, and a note from the development director.

September 22 (Back to School Night): Even though nothing is said about the annual campaign, this evening "sells" the school program better than any other single event.

September 23: Annual campaign letters are mailed to all parents. This letter from the parent chair describes the annual giving campaign, the trustee challenges, and the school's need for the support of parents. It includes the annual campaign brochure, a pledge card, and a return postage-paid envelope for parents to send in their gifts.

October 25, 26, 27: Phonathons are held at school. Lower School callers meet on the first day, Middle School on the second, and Upper School on the third. The class leaders invite class callers to participate and tell the development office the names of those who agree to help. We then send reminder postcards the week before the phonathon. When the callers arrive around 6 p.m. on the night of the phonathon, we offer them wine, beer, or soft drinks and a chance to socialize briefly before the buffet supper. We usually have chili, salad, and dessert or a similar substantial (but not extravagant) meal.

While everyone is eating, the parent chair and I review some facts about the school: the ratio of faculty to students, why we must raise money each year, and other important information. We tell them that the phonathon is a very important link between the school and the parents.

We warn them that while they should expect to hear good things from about 95 percent of the parents they reach (in fact parents often say "thank you for

calling"), occasionally they may call a parent who is upset about something and bombards them with his or her angry feelings. In this case, I ask them to listen carefully and report to me, and I will relay the problem to the appropriate person or office.

We used to give our callers a script, but we found that they really wanted to say it their own way. We do, however, ask that they include the following, phrased in their own words if they prefer:

> I am a CA parent calling from the school for the annual giving campaign. I want to be sure that you have received the recent mailing about the campaign, and I want to explain the two challenges: When you send in your gift or your pledge card (pledges don't have to be paid until June), you will help to qualify for two $5,000 challenge gifts.

We also ask the callers to say, "Will you share with me the amount of your pledge to the school?" This is a very important question. Our experience indicates that over 80 percent of those who state the amount of their gift will follow through, whereas less than 50 percent of those who say, "I'll send something" actually do.

We remind phonathon callers to assure prospects that *every* gift is appreciated, even the smallest ones.

We organize the phonathon as follows:

1. Class leaders call previous significant donors—those who have given $250 or more—to thank them for their former support and to answer any questions they might have about the gift clubs and the challenges or any other aspect of the campaign. Class leaders ask prospects to consider increasing their support this year.

2. Class callers call the parents in each class to ask if there are questions about the challenge deadlines, gift clubs, and the campaign in general, and to ask for their support.

3. Trustees are invited to attend the phonathon to call new parents to make sure they understand the school's need and that they are aware of the Thanksgiving deadline for the trustee challenge.

After the phonathon, all of the callers send notes to all of their prospects (even those they did not reach) to ask for their support or to thank them for their pledge. These notes are sent with pledge cards and return envelopes the very next day.

November 10: Class leaders mail letters (on their personal stationery for a change) to all nondonors reminding them of the fast approaching challenge deadline and the school's need for parents' support.

November 24, Thanksgiving (challenge deadline): To qualify for the $5,000 trustee challenge gift, by this date the campaign must have received

gifts or written pledges from 70 percent of the parents. (We honored those received as late as Monday, November 28.)

Early in January: Class leaders participate in a phonathon from their home or office. They call the remaining names, describing an early end to the campaign. Ideally, the campaign concludes just before February 1 when reenrollment forms are sent out to parents for 1989-90. We want to secure, as best we can, parents' gifts to the annual campaign *before* they are required to reenroll and send a sizable deposit.

April: The campaign is completed. We hold a debriefing session to review mistakes and successes and to prepare for the next campaign. Donors of $1,000 to $1,999 and all class leaders and callers are invited to the Alchemist Buffet at a CA trustee's home. Donors of $2,000 to $2,999 attend the Headmaster's Club Dinner. And Leadership Roundtable donors ($3,000 and over) are entertained by the president of the board and the headmaster. All of these occasions are very special. The headmaster and many trustees attend and take the opportunity to thank these extra-generous parents.

May: Letters are sent to nondonors. Calls are made by class leaders to encourage parents who have pledged to complete their pledges. Everyone pursues every pledge down to the very last day of the fiscal year. It is important to meet the 90-percent parent participation goal—important to the school *and* to the campaign leadership.

Planning begins for next year's campaign.

Promise—and deliver—staff support

Staff support for the parent volunteer leadership is essential. And this means both moral and practical support. Practical support includes making certain that *everything* sent is accurate, that letters are properly addressed, that acknowledgements are prompt and records are correct.

Without moral support, volunteers will not feel that their efforts are important. As Robert W. Woodruff, former president of Coca-Cola, once said, "There's no limit to what a man can accomplish or how far he can go, if he doesn't care who gets the credit." This is the staff credo at Colorado Academy. I won't say that it's easy to follow 365 days a year, but it's a philosophy that all of us in the development office believe in.

We are here to support the volunteers, to make sure their procedures work and their goals are reached. Sometimes we must guide them away from unrealistic aims or from practices that probably won't work or might backfire. But I often have to remind myself that an idea that seems unrealistic may very well succeed if it's introduced and pursued with energy by a committed parent who is determined to make it work or to die trying.

The first time we created a trustee-funded challenge to secure gifts from 90 percent of our parents, I was worried. I should have known better because on

the last day of June, which was the last day of the campaign, our parent chair went to five homes and offices to secure the necessary checks. He was *committed* to meeting the challenge in which he had invested his energy all year.

Some of what we do as professional fund raisers we must do year after year. We must mount a campaign every year, and we may often feel that each campaign is just like the one we ran last year and the one we will run next year. What gives newness and excitement to this repetitive process, what can reinvigorate it is parent leaders imbued with enthusiasm and energy. These volunteers—if you are lucky enough to have them and smart enough to treat them well—are the bubbles in the champagne glass. They give your annual campaign pop and sparkle. And if you've helped to make these parent volunteers succeed, you can share their pride when the board president congratulates them on the successful completion of the campaign.

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Figure 21-1: Page from Annual Campaign Brochure

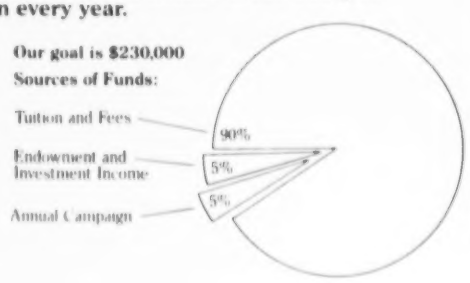
Join the parents, alumni, staff, grandparents and friends of CA who give generously to the Annual Campaign every year.

Your gift means that CA can:

- offer superior learning opportunities
  - small classes
  - computers and libraries in each division
  - community service programs
  - foreign languages
  - athletics and fine arts for everyone
- award faculty enrichment grants
- provide scholarships (including those for our staff children)
- maintain our 75 acre campus

Our goal is $230,000

Sources of Funds:



Chapter 22

Dear Mom and Dad: Please Send Money

John H. Detmold
Director Emeritus of Development
Smith College

If I had to offer one piece of advice on how to make your parents program succeed, it would be this: Don't overlook the chance to raise money through it.

I learned this the hard way. In 1951, with a great show of industriousness, we started a Parents Club at Wells College. The parents elected officers, organized a Parents Weekend, and had a ball. It wouldn't be long, we thought, before everyone would translate this good will into annual gifts.

Three years later, I decided we'd waited long enough. I drafted a letter asking for contributions to a parents fund, took it to the Parents Club president, and asked him to sign it. He agreed to at once. The results made me regret wasting those three years.

The fact is, parents represent a major but largely neglected source of annual, capital, and deferred gifts. There's no question that parents are strongly interested in their children's schools or colleges; this is especially true when the son or daughter is first admitted. (I know that I've always been even more interested in the schools my children were attending than in my own alma matter.)

Despite this, most development officers devote far more attention to their alumni than to the parents of their current and former students. This is true even though there are often more parents than alumni—and most parents are better able to give than their children.

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Parents present a special challenge, however. That's because you have only four years *or less* to capture their interest. And even cultivated parents—in both senses of the adjective—have to be asked to give. So how do you start?

Begin at the beginning

Simply draft a letter asking parents of your current *and former* students to join your alumni in supporting the institution's educational program.

Show this draft to a likely candidate from your roster of parents and ask if he or she will sign it. Chances are the person will be glad to. (In some 30 years of this, while enlisting I don't know how many parents to serve on parents fund committees, I never once ran into anyone who declined.)

As a courtesy, you should also give the volunteer the chance to rewrite the letter, "to put it into your own words." He or she will usually say, "It sounds fine as is."

You then get your local printer to reproduce—on the writer's own letterhead—enough copies for every parent, old and new, for whom you have a current address. To avoid writer's cramp, you can also have the signature reproduced. Just use blue ink, please, for greater verisimilitude. Then mail the letters, with reply envelopes addressed to the parents fund at your institution, and wait for the checks to roll in.

But don't stop there. Get another letter out a few months later. Report the dollar results of the first one, thank those whose gifts produced the interim total, and invite everyone else to come to the aid of the cause. Many will. Indeed, some of those who gave the first time will respond with another check. This might be because they forgot their first gift, but it will probably be because—if you are any good as a letter writer—this still sounds like a good cause that deserves their support.

Broadening your efforts

In addition to money, an important dividend of any effective parents program will be the volunteers it turns up. Some of the best trustees at each college where I've worked were parents first, trustees afterward.

These volunteers can also help with fund raising, of course. One good way to organize them is through a parents fund committee. An ideal committee might consist of 15 members: three representing the parents of each class and three more to represent the parents of your alumni. (The latter group, being the largest, is by far the most important. How do you obtain current addresses for these parents if you dropped them back when their children graduated?

By including this question in your next alumni questionnaire: "Name and address of your parents, if living.")

Ask each member of the committee to write one letter a year. For example, all freshman parents hear from the three freshman committee members, in turn, in November, February, and May. Always encourage the members to write on their own business or personal letterhead. This will get better results than one specially designed for the committee and coming, all too obviously, from the development office.

In time, you can add a special gifts phase to these appeals. Parents identified by your research as potential donors of, for example, $1,000 a year should be asked to consider contributions at that level. These donors can be named President's Associates when they come through.

The tone of letters like these is critically important. Having drafted a lot of them over the years, I hope I learned what makes them effective. Above all, strive for the light touch.

With any luck, the replies to your letters will do two things. They will produce a steadily increasing amount of annual gifts, and they will help you identify the likeliest major gift prospects among your parents.

I remember one Sweet Briar College father who invariably sent us a check for $5,000 every time he got one of those letters. We were sending two a year, and I was strongly tempted to write to him more often. Years later, a Smith College mother responded as regularly and even more generously.

Obviously, you should give these self-selected parents the individual attention they deserve. Instead of a form letter, use a more personal letter tailored to their interests. Or arrange for a trustee, a trusted volunteer, or your president or school head to call on them personally.

From such little acorns it is possible to grow an endowed chair, a six-figure life income gift, a new chapel, or even a new campus. Several colleges owe their very existence to parents; Sweet Briar and Stanford University are but two that were founded by parents as memorials to a child.

Other institutions owe their rebirth to parents. Skidmore College is a good example. J. Erik Jonsson, the former mayor of Dallas who made his money in Texas Instruments, agreed to serve on Skidmore's board of trustees because he liked the education that college gave his daughter. So when a new federal highway threatened the old campus, he gave the college a new one of 1,000 acres—and threw in a million dollars for what might be called moving expenses.

Never say die

As is true with all fund-raising efforts, you often don't know how or when your work with parents will pay off.

I remember one Sweet Briar father who never responded to our parents fund letters, although we knew he could well afford to. After getting these

letters for several years, he wrote to the president to commend the idea of encouraging parents as well as alumni to support the college. He explained that he had not contributed only because he gave all his free income to another institution for which he served as chairman of the board. Almost as an afterthought, he added that he had decided to provide for Sweet Briar in his will to the tune of $250,000.

This persuaded me never to clear out the "deadwood" from a parents mailing list. You never know what spark of interest you may have struck in your silent readers, so why not continue to talk to them?

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Chapter 23

Parents Funds: Are We Asking Too Much?

Allan C. Crocker
Director, Parents Fund
Skidmore College

I'm sure this is a question that was asked by Skidmore parents many years ago, but the answer was always "no." Skidmore's Annual Parents Fund (APF) is a program that was initiated not by the college but by parents. It began modestly, approximately 25 years ago, with a small group of parents who wanted to do something extra for the college.

At that time, Skidmore was a relatively young institution doing little fund raising of either an annual or capital nature. We had two weekends that involved parents: the traditional Parents Weekend and "Happy Pappy" Weekend. Skidmore was a women's college and Happy Pappy Weekend was for fathers and daughters. It was a wonderful event, not only for participants, the merchants of Saratoga, and the college, but also for the development office. Something special happened during those weekends; Skidmore fathers felt a need to help the college, and they gave generously.

Somehow, out of the enthusiasm created by Happy Pappy Weekend, a group of interested fathers initiated the Annual Parents Fund. Their first activity was to send a letter to all Skidmore parents asking them to contribute to this fund. The result was modest but encouraging. The development staff, seeing this as a relatively easy way to raise funds, formed a Parents Committee and began to develop a simple program, which at first consisted of no more than a couple of solicitation letters a year sent out over the signatures of the Parents Committee members.

Then the administration, perceiving the hidden gold in the interest of this small group of parents, invited a few of the most vocal and visible to serve on the Board of Trustees. Skidmore parents were pleased to gain representation on the board. While the number of parents involved at the board level has varied over the succeeding years, it has been as many as nine out of 30 slots—almost a third.

The college grew and eventually went co-ed and our Happy Pappy Weekend became obsolete. While we hated to see it disappear, as Skidmore became a stronger co-ed institution, a father-daughter event was no longer appropriate.

For a while, we continued to struggle along with our small Parents Committee, but we finally saw that if we wanted an effective group, we would have to be more aggressive about it. We changed the name to the Parents Council, recruited a couple as the chairs, and asked several parents to serve. We decided that a membership of approximately 40 families would be a manageable and representative group, and we made it clear at the start that we expected Council members to make gifts to the Fund as well as soliciting other parents.

The first year, the Council's only activity was fund raising, primarily in the fall through telephone and personal solicitation. The Council chairs prepared two fund-raising brochures; one was mailed in the late fall and one in the spring.

In the second year, with strong staff support from the admissions office, the Parents Council entered the admissions arena. We conducted a parent-to-parent program in which current parents called parents of accepted students to answer any questions they might have. This past year, we extended our efforts into a third area—career planning. The purpose of this activity is to create a network between parents and students for business internships while the student is attending Skidmore and for job referral and placement after graduation. Both the admissions and career planning activities have subchairs to oversee these efforts.

What does this do for fund raising?

While not all parents who want to get involved in the life of the college are interested in fund raising, most are willing to do career planning or admissions work. Parents involved in these areas consider themselves much closer to the college and demonstrate a willingness to support the institution financially at a much higher level than if they were not part of this group.

As our major prospect list grows, it has become impossible for all the people on it to receive staff attention. This was the case during our recent capital campaign which involved even those staff members who usually work on the annual fund.

The APF calendar

Over the course of our fiscal year, July 1 through June 30, we schedule certain activities and mailings that are designed to help us reach our annual goal. The APF dollar goal is established by the vice president for development and alumni affairs in conjunction with the president and his staff. Although there is no specific donor goal, we strive for at least a 25 percent participation from our constituency.

In order to accomplish this objective we have developed a calendar of events that works well for us.

In September, we maintain a certain visibility at the opening of the college by attending all the events at which it's appropriate for development people to appear (we don't want to seem over-anxious). In October, we start the fund-raising year with Parents Weekend. At this time, Parents Council members meet to prepare for their fund-raising activity, which reaches its height between the middle of October and the end of December. At this meeting, members of the Council are given a minimum of five prospects to contact by phone or, preferably, in person. The prospects are preselected by the director of the Parents Fund from a pool of significant prospects.

Parents Council chairs make a brief presentation at an all-parent breakfast held on the Sunday of Parents Weekend; they talk about the Council and solicit involvement from parents in fund-raising, career planning, and admissions programs.

Also in October, immediately after Parents Weekend, parents receive a letter from the president in which he introduces the Parents Council and asks parents to contribute to the Parents Fund. We get a good response to this letter.

November brings a mailing from the Parents Council to seek contributions to the Fund. This is usually the most successful mailing because of the timing. The end of the calendar year always seems to be important to parents. Also in November, the Parents Council members make a majority of their fund-raising calls.

In early December, the Council mails the *Skidmore College Parents Newsletter* to the entire parent constituency. This newsletter contains an array of general information about the college and an article about the Fund.

In early February we conduct a student phonathon with the help of our student volunteer group, the Pacesetters (more about this below). The phonathon concentrates primarily on LYBUNTs (those who gave "last year but unfortunately not this"), a list which is carefully screened by the development office in advance. This has also proved to be relatively successful.

February brings another *Parents Newsletter*, again with an article about the progress of the Fund. In March, a second mailing from the Parents Council goes to those who have not yet given. At a second Parents Council meeting in March, we attempt to reinforce (or renew if necessary) the enthusiasm of the group; we also ask them to make a few more phone calls to LYBUNTs. But for

the majority of this meeting, we concentrate on the career planning and the admissions programs because Council members' work on the fund is nearly complete.

In May we do our fourth mailing. This is most often a brochure that contains a message from any one of a number of people—a student, the Parents Fund director, another member of the administration, or a faculty member. The purpose of this brochure is to urge those who have not yet given to make a gift before June 30 as we are generally still short of the goal at this point in early May. We try to change this particular mailing each year. This has also proven quite successful.

We hold a commencement breakfast in May for selected seniors and their families. This is a small group of people who have been helpful to us in many ways. It's our way of recognizing those who have worked with us and encouraging them to stay involved with the college after their child has graduated.

In June we do another phonathon, if necessary, using the development office staff and some Parents Council members, but this will depend on how close we are to attaining our goal.

Cultivation events

Throughout the year, we hold six receptions for parents. These receptions, which are sponsored by trustees, are held in New York City, Boston, and at least two other major cities. The president is a special guest, and for receptions held late enough in the spring, parents of accepted early-decision students are also invited.

These are cultivation events that keep parents focused on activities at the college. At all of these receptions, the president, or whoever is representing the college, gives a brief mention of the Annual Parents Fund.

We also try to schedule two or three events over the summer. One of our most popular events, in June in New York City, is a reception sponsored by a parent for parents of incoming freshmen from that area, a group that usually comprises approximately 10 percent of our freshman class. Admittedly, June is a little early to put too much emphasis on the APF, but this affair does give the development office an opportunity to meet a group of new parents.

We schedule two similar receptions in vacation areas close to New York City and Boston. Sponsored by parents or trustees, these receptions also serve as cultivation events. We invite parents of incoming freshmen as well as any other Skidmore parents we know who live in the area.

After cultivation, solicitation

Much of our solicitation of parents is done through phonathons. As the alumni office pays its student callers to participate in phonathons, we would be hard-

pressed to find volunteers were it not for the Pacesetters, a volunteer group of students organized by the alumni office. These young people are involved in a number of activities on campus, and they also spearhead the parents phonathon in January or early February.

The phonathon lasts four days starting in the late afternoon on Sunday and continuing on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings. We extend it to a fourth night if necessary. However, we find that if we limit it to LYBUNTs and other selected groups, the Pacesetters can usually handle it during the four-day period. By the time of the phonathon, the list of those parents who have not yet given to the APF should be manageable.

Conclusion

Parent involvement at Skidmore is very significant. Last year, we received more than 1,000 gifts representing about 25 percent of our parent constituency for a total of over $325,000. This represents 21 percent of the total annual fund.

As you can see, we expect a lot from our parents, both for annual giving as well as for active support of our capital efforts. In order to continue the strong giving patterns that have been established over the years, the college has made a commitment to devote ample staff time to this group. And it pays off, not only with a strong Annual Parents Fund but also with some very generous gifts for capital campaigns and for other areas in which parents have a significant interest. Parents are often more aware than alumni of what the college needs, and they are eager to fill a need quickly so that their child will benefit from the new piece of equipment, the new athletic field, the special collection in the library, or whatever the gift might be.

And so I still hear from many people—but rarely from Skidmore parents—"How can you ask them for a gift when they are paying so much for their child to attend college?" I believe that none of us should be bashful about asking parents to help; they want to make their child's experience at the college a truly significant and memorable one, and the Annual Parents Fund is one way of doing that.

We continue to believe in a strong need for parent cultivation at Skidmore. Indeed, we plan to increase the attention paid to this constituency that has been so important to us in the past and will continue to be equally important in the future.

Chapter 24

"Grandparents Are Softies"

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World Book Year Book *and* World Book Health & Medical Annual
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In 1926, Yale University asked Frank Owen Heywood Williams to chair its Louisville, Kentucky, special gifts campaign—part of a $20 million fund-raising drive.

That was an impressive task for a 27-year-old newspaper ad salesman.

" 'Special gifts' means big money. I decided that in order to have the courage to go after the big dough, I had to make a gift myself," Williams recalls.

So he took out a $600 loan to cover a donation to Yale. "Nobody knew that," he says. "I did it to give myself confidence. I thought, 'I've done my share.' "

The result? "I was very, very successful."

Since that first fund-raising assignment, Williams says, "I have never raised a dime without first examining my own capacity to give. It gives you a hell of a lot of courage."

Williams, now 86, has needed a lot of courage. He's raised funds for colleges, independent schools, hospitals, ballet companies, music festivals, and political parties—"Everybody but myself," he notes.

He had the courage to ask for a gift to Yale from Henry Ford II, who, years before, had left Yale under a cloud without completing his degree. At Williams' urging, Ford pledged $2.5 million—and Ford's brother and sister gave another million each.

He had the courage to tear up a $1-million check, meant to pay for two endowed chairs, because the donor wanted to specify what theories the new professors were to teach.

But Williams' latest triumphs haven't sprung from his fund raising for Yale. It was his work with Renbrook School, where he founded a Grandparents' Group six years ago, that earned him CASE's 1984 Volunteer of the Year award.

"Indulged, but not spoiled"

Williams turned his talents to Renbrook when his two grandchildren, Amanda and Tony, were attending the school, located in Williams' hometown of West Hartford, Connecticut. Williams, who retired in 1964 from his position as a senior vice president of Connecticut General Life Insurance, was already a legend in Hartford's fund-raising circles.

Williams is the first to admit that he has "indulged but not spoiled" his only grandson, now a junior at Brown. "I never had a son, and Tony's brought more real happiness and joy to my life than anything else."

And, as Renbrook officials have discovered, grandparents often express their happiness in concrete terms. "I thought, Renbrook has done a lot for Amanda and Tony, so I've tried to do a lot for Renbrook," Williams explains.

So, in 1973, when Tony was nine, Williams approached Renbrook's head. "I said, 'You people are missing the boat. You have no one specializing on grandparents. Grandparents are terrible softies—we're suckers as far as our grandchildren are concerned.' "

At Williams' suggestion, Renbrook planned a day for grandparents to visit Renbrook and observe the school. Then, Williams wrote to the grandparents, "expounding on my opinion that the years between kindergarten and ninth grade are the most important in the development of a human being." That first appeal drew $1,800; donations doubled the next year and continued to rise.

In 1978, when Tony left to attend Hotchkiss School, the Renbrook board passed a resolution honoring Williams. The statement thanked Williams for his advice and support, and ended with a pledge "to bend every effort. . .to ensure [Williams'] continued active interest in and affection for Renbrook."

"That was a very smart thing," Williams recalls. "It gave me a lovely ego massage. No one can resist that. So I kept working for Renbrook."

Williams went on to organize a Grandparents' Group, establishing this constituency as a distinct entity with its own fund-raising projects. The group's first goal was to endow a $50,000 head's discretionary fund, which eventually drew $55,300 in gifts. Then came a plant maintenance fund of $166,800, more than half of which came from one grandfather. The group also raised $14,400 for a Middle School playground and $80,200 for a faculty sabbatical fund.

And, when Williams heard Renbrook's librarian mention that the library could use 796 new books, Williams raised the necessary $10,000 within three days. That led to a grandparent-sponsored library acquisition fund of $12,800—including Williams' gift of his $2,500 Volunteer of the Year award.

Those projects, plus $813,000 in capital contributions, bring the contributions of Renbrook's Grandparents' Group to more than $1.1 million in six years.

"Puff up their egos"

Williams insists that Renbrook's success with grandparents doesn't rest entirely with his own golden touch: "I'm not unusual—I'm just unusually lucky." He freely shares a few of his secrets.

First, he says, "Get a very small, very good executive committee of grandparents of means—five or six who are themselves excited." Williams appointed himself secretary to the executive committee of Renbrook's Grandparents' Group. In that position, he takes care of all the paperwork and planning.

Then, "Invite the grandparents up for a Grandparents' Day. Give them lunch. Don't say anything about money—just let them see the school, with their grandchildren in action." This visit is crucial, he says. "Parents know what's going on at the school, since they go there every day. But grandparents don't. You need to show them the quality of the school."

Director of Development Julia Dunlop adds that the visitors especially enjoy observing the younger grades: "What can the little bundles do wrong?" Whatever Renbrook's 490 students are doing, the grandparents must like it. Last Grandparents' Day drew 257 guests, many of whom came from outside the Hartford area.

Only after you've shown off the school, Williams says, should you write for donations. In addition to stressing the importance of the formative years, Williams' letters point out that often students' parents don't have the money for gifts.

Still, Williams adds, grandparents' ability to give and the fact that they're "soft touches" aren't the only reasons to seek them out. There's also the question of self-worth.

"Most people vegetate and die after retiring. When you get to be 65 years old, no one gives a damn about your opinion or suggestions. You've had it. Suddenly, when you find yourself being asked to be interested in something, it means so much," he says.

"The whole thing is to make the grandparents feel they have something important to do. Many of these older people feel lost. They have nothing. You need to puff up their egos."

"Shooting fish in a barrel"

Williams, who retired 21 years ago, obviously hasn't vegetated. "In those 21 years, I've lived a second life," he says. As proof, he points out a pile of

scrapbooks chronicling his post-professional career. Seven of the red-bound books—kept by his second wife, who died four years ago—form a pile under an end table in the living room.

Nearby, a piano has taken on a second life of its own as a gallery for dozens of photographs, mostly of Tony and Amanda. Across the room, Tony's athletic trophies crowd the mantel. One trophy—for golf—is Williams' own. Williams gave up golf after he hurt his shoulder exercising a horse. But he hasn't given up riding horses.

"People who have extracurricular interests during their working lives always have something to be excited about," he says. Long ago, he says, "I made up my mind to do other things besides work."

Williams, who calls himself "the last of the Victorians," was born to Welsh parents in Shropshire, England, in 1899. His family came to America in 1907 and eventually settled in New Haven, Connecticut. He worked his way through high school, then through Yale. When he graduated in 1922, he ranked among the Most Popular, the Best Dressed, and the Most Thorough Gentlemen in his class.

His degree was in chemical engineering, but engineers were plentiful in post-World War I New England. He ended up in advertising, first in New York, where he developed a love for theater and ballet, and then in Louisville. Then he returned to New Haven to work as publisher of the *Yale Alumni News* from 1928 to 1932.

By this time he was married and owned $138,000 of life insurance. "I thought, 'If these dumb guys who sell me insurance can make a living, it must be like shooting fish in a barrel.' " He learned the business on his own, improved upon it, and later joined Connecticut General, where he worked his way up to senior vice president.

The techniques Williams used in selling life insurance applied equally well to fund raising. Over the years, he's held nearly every volunteer fund-raising position Yale has had to offer. In addition to serving as a trustee from 1963-67, he chaired, in turn, the Alumni Board, a major capital campaign, and the Yale Development Committee. In 1962, he received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, alongside fellow honoree John F. Kennedy.

Education has always been Williams' top priority, with health and the arts running close behind. He became involved with Ethel Walker School after he began riding at its stables; he ended up serving as chair of its board of trustees, and the school has named a stable in his honor. He raised $1.5 million as board president for the Hartford College for Women. And when Tony dared to turn down Yale in favor of Brown, Williams took a deep breath and became the first grandparent to head the Brown Parents' Fund.

Williams' fund-raising skills are famous in the Hartford community as well. "When anyone in Hartford wants money raised, they call me," he admits. His dozens of other causes range from the Hartford Stage Company and the Hartford Ballet—both of which he founded—to four hospitals and Citizens

for Eisenhower. "I thought by now people would cringe when they saw me coming, but I haven't lost a friend," he says.

That's because "they know whatever I'm raising money for is worthwhile," he says. "I've raised money for everything I believe in. I believed in Eisenhower. I believe in Renbrook. I believe in Yale. I believed we needed a stage company in Hartford."

In fact, he cites belief in one's cause as a primary requirement for successful fund raising. "When you're interested in something, you become knowledgeable, and knowledgeable means articulate. You have to be sufficiently articulate to tell the story." Williams is certainly articulate. He always speaks spontaneously, without notes.

But a few favorite nuggets of fund-raising wisdom do come up again and again. Renbrook officials put one of Williams' sayings on Lucite paperweights: "Never say 'baa baa' when 'baa' will do." That comes from his life insurance days, he explains. "When I was training salesmen, I told them to cultivate the art of listening. If you listen long enough you can find the hot button to press."

He carries another favorite saying with him, ready to pull from his wallet when he needs it:

> A cow will not give milk if you write her a letter. She will not wet the bottom of your bucket in answer to the most frantic telegram. Your protestations of need to her via the telephone will move her not. Radio and TV entreaties will elicit a slight "moo" of appreciation, but bring nothing for the separator. The only way you can get milk from a cow is to sit down beside her and give her your undivided attention.

Keeping young

Somehow Williams never gets tired of fund raising. "I keep thinking I should quit, but I keep finding new causes," he says.

He admits that he is himself a soft touch when he's asked to raise money for a good cause—especially if women do the asking. (Tony claims that his grandfather's initials really stand for "Fond Of His Women," Williams says.)

But his favorite cause—next to Yale, of course—is Renbrook. In 1981, to commemorate Williams' 82nd birthday, Renbrook named him an "honorary student." That unique status remains Williams' only official connection with the school—"and he takes it very seriously," says Dunlop. "He says, 'Why would I want to be a trustee?' "

As it is, when Williams attends meetings, he often brings along one of his two terriers. "The dog's patience lasts about an hour," Dunlop says. "Then

Frank will say, 'Well, Sammy says it's time to go.' It's a clever way to break up long meetings."

Williams prefers his role as Renbrook student. Every Friday, he drives his "sedate Volvo" to the school, where he joins the ninth grade for a computer class: "I wanted to sell my grandson and my daughter on the virtues of word-processing, but I thought I ought to know something about it myself first." He recently lectured to classes about life in the '20s. "He's part of the lifeblood of the school," Dunlop says.

"It keeps me young," says Williams.

Reprinted from CURRENTS, *June 1985. Williams, who turned 90 this year, is still active on behalf of Renbrook.*

Chapter 25

Parents of Graduates: Four-year Friends or Long-term Supporters?

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Hobart and William Smith Colleges

You may have turned to this chapter because you are wondering if a program for parents of graduates would be worthwhile or appropriate for your institution. Perhaps you are looking for new sources of revenue and want to increase giving from this constituency. Are you feeling frustration as your best donors and volunteers lose interest in your institution when their students graduate? A plan to target graduate parents for more attention can, indeed, increase your revenue from this constituency and, at the same time, convert four-year friends to long-term supporters.

As you consider expanding your parents program to include work with graduate parents, you may want to assess your available resources—the time, energy, and creativity, both of yourself and of your staff. The initial expenses of developing this program in the manner suggested in this chapter will be low, however, and you should recoup them easily after the program has been running for a few years.

Before you attempt to reach out to this new constituency, you should have had an established program for parents in place for approximately five years. This is important because you will build your new program on a smoothly running enterprise for undergraduate parents. You will also have had time to accumulate the records you will need for a "generation" or more of parents

who have proceeded from being parents of freshmen to being parents of graduates.

If you are just starting a program for undergraduate parents, however, don't feel that you should skip this chapter. We will be examining donor motivation, gift tracking, goal setting, communication, soliciting and acknowledging gifts, and donor file management. You will find food for thought here—ideas that may help you shape your programs today as well as those in the future.

A neglected constituency

Volunteer and financial support from parents of graduates can be invaluable, but evidence suggests that most institutions, even those with long traditions of graduate parent involvement, do not pay much attention to this constituency. One reason may be because, of the five major motivations for graduate parent support, all but the last two are primarily dependent on the experience the parent and his or her student have already had during the undergraduate years:

- appreciation and gratitude for their son's or daughter's educational experience;
- warm feelings for the institution;
- positive involvement with the institution during the student's undergraduate years;
- understanding and belief in the needs of educational institutions; and
- pride in belonging to a select group of interested parents.

Since an effective parents program creates and sustains these first three motivations, you can see how a graduate parents enterprise should develop naturally from an existing program.

A parent who has become alienated or whose child has had an unpleasant experience at your institution is unlikely to be active as a graduate parent, no matter how enticing your events or how effective your appeal. On the other hand, the satisfied involved parent may be persuaded to continue his or her support.

Assess and compare: Getting the data

The first step toward developing initiatives directed at your graduate parents is to understand their current role, if any. Then you will need to track their responses as your program grows. To do this, you must separate them from parents of current students by including class year in your database. This will allow you to determine how much your graduate parents contribute if you enter class year when every gift is recorded. This is easier for data entry

personnel if the student's class year is printed on the solicitation reply form, next to the parent's ID number.

The answers to the questions below, and others in this chapter, form the basis by which you will begin to understand the nature of your graduate parent constituency.

Figure 25-1 at the end of the chapter offers some insights into other parents programs that you may want to review as you answer these questions. Information was gathered in 1987 for a Parents Conference at Skidmore College.

Who are the parents of your alumni? To answer this question, you need the following information:

1. Number of students? _____
2. Number of parents on file? _____
3. Number of graduate parents on file? _____
4. What percentage of your total parent file is composed of graduate parents? _____ percent

Once you are able to sort parents and their contributions by class year, you can easily generate a report of parent gifts by class (Figure 25-2). At Hobart and William Smith Colleges, we use this report each month to pinpoint problems and identify successes. For example, we can tell when the response to a special graduating class mailing has been positive by comparing the increase in that class's giving over the previous year. If participation by first-year parents seems particularly low, we can target that class for a mail or phone solicitation aimed at increasing the number of donors.

At the end of your fiscal year, this report will also enable you to identify giving patterns in your program that may determine your overall parents fund goal. For instance, we've found that if a class with particularly generous parents is about to graduate, we must look closely at the parents of the incoming freshman class to ascertain whether they show the potential to make up some of that anticipated loss.

During the first year after graduation, there is a normal attrition among parents. Hobart and William Smith parents' gifts and their level of participation will usually decrease about 30 to 35 percent from what it was during their students' senior year. When you have maintained records for two or more years, you will be able to predict what your institution's rate of attrition will be.

Understanding and anticipating this recurring pattern of first-year attrition among graduate parents may be particularly helpful if you are just now extending your program to include them. Don't expect graduate parents to become a driving force in your parent fund-raising program immediately. Most institutions whose parents of alumni give a high percentage of the total parents fund have been soliciting them for over 10 years.

How effective are your present fund-raising efforts? If you are already soliciting graduate parents, the ability to segment gifts by class will enable you

to examine closely your current program. After answering the following questions, one development officer was surprised to learn that contributions from parents of alumni account for over 60 percent of his parents fund.

5. Annual fund dollars raised from all parents? _____
6. Annual fund dollars raised from graduate parents? _____
7. Graduate parents give what percentage of your total parents fund? _____percent
8. _____percent of all parents solicited give to your annual fund.
9. _____percent of graduate parents solicited give to your annual fund.

Whether you have a 45-year-old tradition of parent support or a program of recent vintage, you can, with just a little effort, cultivate your graduate parent constituency in ways that will yield gifts for your institution. Since computers make it easy to track the longevity of support by parents, you can effectively use those statistics in your publications.

The founder of the Hobart and William Smith Parents Association had the foresight, 35 years ago, to begin documenting parent contributions. Today, we are able to print the number of yearly gifts next to the name of each parent donor in our annual report. Alumni and parents often comment on the loyalty of so many contributors. It is a powerful reinforcement for the donor and a compelling motivation for the undergraduate parent.

Articles about graduate parent contributions in your parent newsletter will launch the campaign to build and retain parents' support. Remember, first-year parents are learning what your program is all about, and knowing that others enthusiastically endorse your institution even after their sons and daughters have graduated is reassuring to them. They trust that commitment—as do alumni.

When your volunteers are soliciting and thanking graduate parents, they will find it reassuring to know how many years their prospects have contributed to your program. Put this information on phonathon forms, and before asking a prospect to continue supporting your institution, the caller can thank a donor for his or her 10, 15, or 20 years of loyalty. In addition, you can create thoughtful personalized solicitation and acknowledgement letters by adding just that one fact.

The process of asking parents for their continued support and thanking them for their loyalty is particularly important since graduate parents have no vested interest in your institution nor do you have the same opportunities to cultivate them as you do parents of current students. Since most parents will not be visiting your campus after their students graduate, it becomes particularly important for you to maintain communication that will keep them abreast of campus news. Parent newsletters and alumni magazines might be mailed regularly to them, and miscellaneous information can supplement your efforts to maintain their interest in your institution.

Certainly your best method of communicating and asking for a gift will remain a personal visit. Individual calls on graduate parents are likely to be

the most rewarding you make. They are no longer concerned about their son's or daughter's performance at your institution, and tuition increases will have no effect on their ability or desire to give. If they have maintained their support since their student's graduation, they are among your most loyal donors.

In fact, you should talk about your graduate parents program during visits with parents of current students—especially parents of juniors and seniors. That is the time to suggest that they join the legion of loyal parents who continue their support after their students become alumni.

How effective is your file management? Assess your file management by answering these questions:

10. How many years after graduation do you maintain nondonor files? _____years

11. What percentage of your graduate parent file is composed of nondonors? _____percent

The biggest frustration of building a graduate parent constituency is that so many parents become nondonors as soon as their son or daughter graduates. On the other hand, some parents find they are able to give only after the financial obligation of educating their student is over. Although you may be tempted to remove undergraduate nondonors right after graduation, most institutions continue to solicit them for three to five years.

If yours is a new program and you choose to solicit nondonors (either never-givers or parents who stop at graduation) for three years after commencement, you won't begin graduate parent file management until the seventh year. By this point, as you begin to purge your file of nondonors, you will have built up a group of loyal parents whose support you can count on. If you have been tracking parent support by class year, you should also have gained a historical perspective that will be enlightening as your program matures.

Although you will probably want to rid your files of nondonor graduate parents at some point, you have the option of keeping their records in a nonsolicited, inactive state. And you should definitely keep in your active file those nondonor parents who are involved as volunteers. Wealthy or influential parents who have great potential to help your institution may also be worth maintaining in an active status if you feel there is a chance they may become interested in a future project.

In order to be aware of these exceptions, you should periodically review your list of nondonors before you delete any names. You may want to choose a week each year in which to manage your graduate parent pool of donors. This should be done at the end of the fiscal year, before you begin the next cycle of solicitations. Here's one method for doing this:

- Order two review lists of graduate parents with giving and biographical information and two corresponding sets of mailing labels. One list should be of parents who have not contributed to the annual fund during the three years (or whatever length of time you decide upon) since their students graduated.

The other list includes parents who have given as graduate parents but not in the last three years.

- Review your lists. If you want to keep parents in the file, destroy their mailing labels and clearly mark on the printout that they are not to be removed. If you are in the middle of a capital campaign, make sure to note unpaid or partially paid pledges on your review list. You don't want to eliminate from your files someone who has made a pledge to the capital campaign but has not been contributing to the annual fund.
- Once you have decided whom you want to keep in your active file, you can throw away the mailing labels for those people and use the remaining labels to send a letter to those you want to remove. If you have the time and the word-processing capability, you can personalize the letter you send to parents who were generous in the past.
- Advise the first group (parents who have not given since graduation) that since you are not aware of a continued interest on their part, you will take them off your mailing list unless you hear from them in the near future. A reply card will enable them to respond.
- Thank those in the second group (parents who have given after their students graduated, but not recently) for their loyal support in the past. Suggest that since you have not heard from them in quite a while, you wonder if they have any further interest in your institution. We recommend an all-or-nothing policy. If nondonors want to receive parent newsletters and the institution's bulletins, they should also continue to be solicited.
- Within a month after your letters have been mailed, remove from your graduate parent file the names of those who have not returned your reply card. Chances are, few will respond, but sending the letters ensures that you won't inadvertently drop someone who has an interest in your institution. Your letter also gives you one more opportunity to tell parents how important their association with your institution has been to you.

Conclusion

Your graduate parents program can be an exciting extension of your work with current parents. As more and more development officers become aware of the potential of this constituency, they are devising innovative ways to build support from graduate parents.

The Mount Holyoke College development staff is considering a plan to ask reunion-year alumnae to identify parents who may want to make a gift in honor of their class reunion. Nondonor parents who had been dropped from the file would be solicited for a gift for their daughter's reunion and then placed back in the active file for further solicitation.

At Amherst College, parents of alumni will be invited to attend a recognition event on campus during the spring parents council meeting.

Your graduate parents may be willing and eager to continue supporting your institution after their students graduate. It is up to you to create an atmosphere in which they will be encouraged to remain an important part of your parent constituency.

*Figure 25-1: Graduate Parent Programs at Five Institutions**

	A	B	C	D	E
1. Students	293	1,400	4,500	2,588	4,000
2. Parents on file	2,098	2,513	9,500	12,114	14,018
3. Graduate parents on file	1,800	1,081	5,700	9,416	5,247
4. Percentage of total parent file composed of grad. parents	85	43	68	78	37
5. Annual fund dollars (all parents)	144,241	157,610	668,699	238,600	564,000
6. Annual fund dollars (grad. parents)	96,708	26,227	314,400	114,261	243,720
7. Percentage of total parents fund given by grad. parents	67	17	47	48	43
8. Percentage of solicited parents who give to annual fund	20	42	37	12	31
9. Percentage of solicited grad. parents who give to annual fund	18	37	31	7	29
10. Years after graduation that nondonors are kept in file	Indefinite	3	5	5	5
11. Percentage of grad. parents in file who are nondonors	82	63	69	93	71

*Institutions represented include:
(A) coed secondary boarding school;
(B) coed liberal arts college;
(C) coed university;
(D) women's liberal arts college; and
(E) men's liberal arts college (recently became coed).

This information was gathered in 1987 at the Parents Conference held at Skidmore College.

Figure 25-2: Parent Gifts by Class (November 1987)

	Number of parents	Number pledged	Percent participating	Dollars pledged	Dollars paid
Class of '91	581	53	9.1	21,980	21,480
Class of '90	598	90	15.1	25,088	21,538
Class of '89	619	109	17.6	27,649	22,499
Class of '88	577	89	15.4	26,990	24,090
Class of '87*	270	25	9.3	42,800	21,100
Balance of grad. parents	1,074	291	27.1	37,953	34,988
Total	3,719	657	17.7	182,460	145,695

*In order to determine first-year attrition, track the most recently graduated class separately from the balance of graduate parents. When figuring total graduate parent giving, add these two categories together.

Section 6

Conclusion

Chapter 26

Last Words: Letting Go While Hanging In There

Susan Hunt
Book Editor
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When you seek to get parents involved at your college or university, remember that you are dealing with the end of a long process.

"Letting go while hanging in there"—that's the name of the game throughout the school years. From the moment the toddler cautiously makes his or her way into the "Mother's Morning Out" program to the time when the parents appear at commencement some 20 years later, parents are learning the difficult lesson: "Let go but be there when they need you."

Mothers of young children often find it difficult to keep away from their child's school. A few years ago when the classroom door of the first grade closed behind my daughter, I was not the only mother left in the hallway to mourn "the end of childhood." Nor do I expect to have become a different person 10 years from now when my daughter packs her bags to go away to college.

In the meantime, I spend a lot of time at her school, helping out in many different ways—as a room mother, library aid, classroom helper, field trip chaperon, baker of brownies, and so on. There's a large group of us. The teachers know us; the school secretaries call us by our first names; we know where to find the copy machine, the pay telephone, the PTA mailbox, and the

"knock-knock" books in the school library. Sometimes it seems that we spend as much time at school as our children do.

Why are we there? First and foremost, it's because we want to be part of this central experience in our children's lives. We want to contribute what we can. But also, I have to admit, we want to watch over them just a little bit longer. We want to make sure they're okay.

Garrison Keillor tells a story about the people of his hometown, "Lake Woebegone." One day the rumor went around that something terrible had happened. The worst disaster anyone could imagine was that something had happened to the children. In the resulting panic, everyone rushed down to the school just to make sure "the kids were okay." (They were.)

And so we brace ourselves for the inevitable separation when the children pack their bags for college. They take their posters off the walls and are gone. Their rooms are empty as though they planned never to come back. It's time to let go.

Yet as a character in the movie *Parenthood* says, "It *never* stops." There is no point at which we cease wanting to look after our children in one way or another. The young adult, however, prefers to be nurtured from a distance. Consider these examples of mothers who perhaps hung in there too long:

> The most extraordinary thing about [Adlai Stevenson's] college years was that his mother lived there during them. . . . One of Stevenson's classmates regarded his mother as "overzealous" in her affection for Stevenson and thought she "overprotected" him. "She embarrassed him often." A close friend of Stevenson has said, "I think the cruelest thing a mother could do to a boy was what she did—go to Princeton when he did."[1]

When Franklin Roosevelt was at Harvard, his mother lived for a time in Boston "to be on hand. . .should he want me." She was determined never to "interfere with his college life," but strain was inevitable.

> Distance [had previously] allowed him to take [with patient grace] her ceaseless exhortations to dress warmly, down his castor oil, pay his bills on time, and be courteous to everyone. . . .
>
> Conflicts between her schedule and his caused tensions that could have no satisfactory resolution. If he interrupted his frenetic routine to attend to his mother, he could not avoid resenting it, however unbothered he may have tried to seem. If he left her on her own too long, her injured air of resignation must have made him feel guilty.[2]

Parents programs legitimize what are, in fact, legitimate concerns. They give us acceptable ways to channel our talents, our dollars, and our love into

usefulness. As long as our children are happy with your institutions, we will be too. We'll be happy to hear from you and eager to help them by helping you.

Notes

[1] Martin, John Bartlow. *Adlai Stevenson of Illinois*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976, p. 57.

[2] Ward, Geoffrey C. *Before the Trumpet: Young Franklin Roosevelt, 1882-1905*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985, pp. 244-45.

About the Editor

Larry J. Weiss, a 1967 journalism/public relations graduate of Bowling Green State University (Ohio), returned to his alma mater in 1973 as assistant director of alumni affairs. Previous to that, he had worked in corporate public relations and advertising for Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Company and The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company.

Among his first assignments upon returning to BGSU was to reorganize and strengthen the university's Parents Club. He worked directly with the Parents Club for several years and, today, is still responsible for BGSU's annual Parents Day program on campus. One chapter of this book deals with the university's Parents Day Show which Weiss initiated in 1976 and continues to lead today.

In 1987 he served as chair of the first-ever CASE Conference on Parent Programs, which was held in Princeton, New Jersey.

Weiss currently serves Bowling Green State University as associate vice president for university relations and director of alumni affairs.

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